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LIFE AND TIMES

OF

FRANCESCO SFORZA

DUKE OF MILAN

WITH A PRELIMINARY SKETCH OF THE HISTORY OF ITALY

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BY

WM. POLLARD URQUHART, ESQ.

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BOOK FIFTH.

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CHAPTER I.

POSITION AND PLANS OF FRANCESCO SFORZA—NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE PARMESE—RECEIVES INTELLIGENCE OF WHAT IS GOING ON AT MILAN.—VIEWS OF THE DIFFERENT PARTIES IN THAT CITY.—CONDUCT OF THE BRACCIANS—ESTABLISHMENT OF A REPUBLIC.—REVOLT OF MOST OF THE CITIES OF LOMBARDY FROM THE MILANESE.—LODI AND PIACENZA SURRENDER TO THE VENETIANS.—SFORZA IS ENGAGED BY THE MILANESE—ADVANCES TO CREMONA—LAYS SIEGE TO SAN COLUMBANO.—PAVIA SURRENDERS TO HIM—ANGER OF THE MILANESE—THEIR DIFFICULTIES—APPROACH OF A FRENCH ARMY.—SFORZA'S ADVICE TO THE MILANESE—MESSAGE TO THE FRENCH COMMANDER—INVESTS PIACENZA—CONSTRUCTS A BRIDGE ACROSS THE PO—TAKES A VENETIAN SPY, WHO AFTERWARDS SUPPLIES HIM WITH INFORMATION—DEFEATS AN ATTEMPT OF THE VENETIANS TO DESTROY THE BRIDGE OF CREMONA.—AFFAIR BETWEEN THE MILANESE AND FRENCH—STORMING OF PIACENZA—SURRENDER OF THE CITADEL—PILLAGE OF THE INHABITANTS.

THE death of Philip, following so closely upon that of Eugenius, seemed likely to be the beginning of a new epoch in the history of Italy. During the twenty-two

years that had elapsed since Sforza had taken the command of his father's troops, the peninsula had presented a strange spectacle. Wars had been undertaken without motive, pursued without vigour, abandoned without any advantage being secured by peace. Alliances had been a thousand times contracted, broken, renewed, and again violated. Treachery had become the moral of the day. Though the military art was no longer ennobled by the desire of saving one's country, every day beheld new captains elevated to independent positions, treating with princes on terms of equality, and not unfrequently ending their career on the scaffold.* This state of things, to which the tortuous policy of Filippo Maria had in part given rise, had assumed a more decided appearance after the accession of Eugenius. It may be recollected that one of the first acts of the latter was to unite the republics of Florence and Venice in a coalition against Philip, which had been continued in various phases till the time of his death. But there was no one now on the throne of the Visconti, and the successor of Eugenius was a man of peace. Even had he been otherwise inclined, the great object for which the former pontiff had fought—the restoration to the church of the territories of Ancona—had been accomplished. A new scene was thus opened to one who proved himself the most skilful of adventurers. And in forming a judgment of the means by which he managed to place himself on the throne of the Visconti, it must be recollected that he lived in an age in which Machiavelli says that

* M. Sismondi, vol. v. cap. 4.

in it men were more ashamed of losing in any manner, than of gaining by deceit.

After his marriage with the daughter of Philip, the tide of his affairs had begun to go out. Though it might now appear to be about to take a turn, it was at this instant at a very low ebb. He had lost all the Neapolitan fiefs that had been left to him by his father. He had just relinquished the city of Jesi, the only spot that remained to him of the extensive territory which he had once possessed in the March of Ancona. The town of Cremona, which had been given to him with his wife, was now surrounded by his enemies. Though he was at the head of an army, he had no money; the man who had promised to supply him was dead; and if the Milanese were to take this opportunity of regaining their liberty, they could hardly be expected to fulfil the pecuniary engagements of their duke. The Venetians were much exasperated at his recent conduct; and it seemed not unlikely that ere long they would be in possession of all Lombardy. Though he had a friend in Cosmo de' Medici, and though the Florentines themselves were as well disposed towards him as they could be to any of his trade, their alliance with the Venetians would prevent them from openly assisting him. Now that Philip was dead, he could expect nothing more from his old enemy Alphonso. However, in the words of Machiavelli, he determined to face his fortune, and let his course be guided by accidents, being well aware that many plans present themselves to a man engaged in active operations, which are not

seen by him while he remains inert. He therefore made up his mind to proceed to Lombardy, to try there how men were disposed to receive him; and he set forth on this, which may be termed the second trial of his fortunes, from Cotignola, the place whence, about seventy years ago, his father first started to embrace the possession of arms. Though Bianca Maria was much distressed at the loss of her parent, she accompanied him in all these movements.

On the fourth day of his march northward he halted in the vicinity of Parma, which had long since fallen under the rule of the Visconti, and in which city he knew he had a considerable party. From this place he sent to inform the Milanese of his approach, ordering his messenger, at the same time, to try the dispositions of the inhabitants of Piacenza, Lodi, and Pavia, on the way. In the mean time he himself began to sound the inclinations of the Parmese. While he was thus engaged, four ambassadors came to him from the city to inform him that the principal inhabitants had agreed to establish a republic, and to entreat him not to menace their liberties. To this he replied, that the Parmese were among the most attached of his friends, and that he would do nothing against them; but that he would be obliged to them if they would tell him in what manner they meant to maintain their independence, while all around them was raging with war. He assured them that he was halting there merely for the purpose of reposing his troops, and tha he would take care that they should abstain from any

offence against either the properties or the persons of the inhabitants.

In the mean time he received intelligence of the state of affairs at Milan. In that city, as he well knew, there was one party attached to his cause, and another, consisting principally of the old friends of Piccinino, and denominated "Braccian," was bitterly opposed to him. Lionel of Este, and Charles of Orleans, the son of the late duke's sister, were talked of as successors to the duchy; but neither of them appeared to have many supporters in Milan. There were also great numbers anxious for the restoration of a republic. When it became evident that Philip's end was drawing nigh, all parties fancied that they saw a fair opportunity for carrying out their views.* The republicans used all their endeavours to bring the populace to their side, and they were joined by many who, though they would not have taken part in an insurrection against Philip, or perhaps, indeed, against any Visconti, were anxious to secure themselves against such acts of tyranny as had been practised by some of his predecessors. Others were continually urging the enfeebled duke to appoint a successor. The partisans of one side represented to him that Sforza was not qualified, either by birth or his present position, to succeed to the splendid heritage of the Visconti; that though he had undoubtedly talent, he had not at present either money or allies,

* "Postquam ægro corpore fatigabatur, aderatque finis et spes novæ; pauci bona libertatis incassum disserere; plures bellum pavescere, alii cupere; pars multo maxima imminentis dominos variis rumoribus differebant."—TACITUS, *Annals*, book i. chap. 4.

and would be unable to maintain its independence against the Venetians; that the king of Naples, being of royal descent, abundantly possessed of all the sinews of war, and the qualifications of a prince, was in every way better fitted to be his successor than an upstart adventurer. By the others it was urged that Alphonso was a barbarian, and consequently unfit to rule over Italians; that Sforza's great talents and popular manners would in themselves be a bulwark of strength, and that he would have no difficulty in finding both men and money for the defence of Milan. Philip, inconstant to the last, could not make up his mind about anything, and is said, with his dying breath, to have expressed a wish that, after his departure from the land of the living, everything should be involved in confusion. The Braccian party, however, who, from their hostility to Sforza, were all in favour of Alphonso, were determined to take advantage of the presence of a Neapolitan force, under the command of one Raymond Boilius. They spread a report* that the duke had in his last moments declared his preference for Alphonso; they managed to introduce his general, along with a body of soldiers, into the citadel, and got some of his partisans to shout out his name in the streets. But this trick failed of the desired effect; the citizens would not join in the cry; they—

* Some contemporary historians write as if they entertained no doubt about the duke's having declared Alphonso his heir. Simoneta and Corio allude to it as a rumour which they affect to disbelieve. Muratori mentions it as a report that was believed at the time, and leaves his readers to judge for themselves. M. Sismondi relates it as it is given in the text.

"Like dumb statues or breathless stones,
Stared at each other, and looked deadly pale." *

Fear and trepidation seemed everywhere. The shops were all shut. For a time everybody was uncertain what course to take. But it was not long before the republican party showed themselves sufficiently strong to assume the direction of affairs, and appointed a provisional government consisting of twenty-four of the best men of the city. Raymond and his associates, finding themselves unsupported, and being assured that Sforza was not to be chosen in place of their king, were happy to be allowed to evacuate the citadel with a small quantity of treasure and booty. After their departure the inhabitants lost no time in levelling with the ground a building whence any one might threaten their liberties.

One of the first acts of the provisional government was to send ambassadors to the Venetians, informing them of their new constitution, seeking their friendship and alliance, and entreating them to join them in persuading the places that had been under the dominion of Philip to remain subject to them. But the other cities of Lombardy, many of which had ill brooked the destruction of their independence by the duke, preferred following their example to complying with their request. A frantic desire of liberty seemed to spread like an epidemic through all. Some of them placed in the citadels those on whom they could most depend; others insisted on seeing those buildings entirely demolished.

* *Richard III.*, Act iii. scene 7.

The whole of Lombardy became a scene of tumult and sedition; and, as is usual on such occasions, rebels, exiles, and vagabonds from all quarters endeavoured to turn to their own account a movement made by those who were desirous of improvement. In the words of Simoneta, all respect for persons, or fear of the Almighty, seemed to have departed. The inhabitants of Como, Novara, and Alessandria, alone consented to obey the Milanese; those of Lodi joined the Venetians. In the midst of this confusion, the two sons of Piccinino, and Charles Gonzaga, the brother of the Signor of Mantua, all of whom had been in the service of Philip, brought their forces out of the city, hoping to get something for themselves in the scramble.

While these things were going on in Milan and the other cities of Lombardy, Michael Attendolo and the Venetian army remained in the country adjoining the town of Cremona. Here they were able to maintain themselves without difficulty, both on account of the fertility of the country and the communication which the Po allowed them to maintain with their metropolis. They had not since the winter made any attempt on the town itself; and it is not improbable that, in the new fusion of parties, they abstained from doing so until they saw in what relation they were likely to stand with its owner. Nevertheless, as the place was one of the principal of the fiefs of Milan, and was important, as commanding both the passage and the navigation of the Po, they for some time held themselves ready, should circumstances require, to take immediate possession of it.

At length, however, Michael Attendolo was induced to relinquish these quarters, by the arrival of an embassy from the Guelf party,* whom he had in the previous year expected to put him in possession of Milan, and who now informed him of the present state of the city, and urged him to march forward and to seize it. On the receipt of this intelligence, his first step was to take possession of San Columbano, a fortress in a commanding position between Lodi and Pavia. The inhabitants of the former of these cities voluntarily surrendered to him; and not long afterwards the Guelf party at Piacenza, who had for some time past disliked the yoke of the Milanese, managed to gain the ascendency, and made over the city to Thaddeus of Este, a general in the service of the Venetians.

For some time the Milanese had hoped that their independence might be secured by a peace which Pope Nicholas had, ever since his accession, been attempting to negotiate. But his endeavours had failed, and the Venetians, encouraged, as we have seen, by the promised support of the Guelfs, and the accounts that they had received of the disunion of the citizens, had haughtily rejected their offers. They, however, were now doomed to experience the truth of Machiavelli's observation,† about keeping citizens in disunion, in the

* Though the contentions of the Guelfs and Ghibellines, properly speaking, had long ceased, I find the expression, "Guelf Party," frequently used by contemporary historians. Of course, it must be understood as denoting the party opposed to the rule of the Visconti, whose ancestors had been among the chiefs of the Ghibellines.

† MACHIAVELLI, *Discorsi*, lib. 3. cap. xxvii.

same manner as Visconti had done when he had hoped to take advantage of the disorders at Florence. At their approach the different factions at Milan, instead of continuing to quarrel, agreed to retain the services of the most successful general of the day. They had hitherto, indeed, avoided employing mercenary captains; for they well knew, and they were destined to experience, that the most skilful of these generals always looked to raise themselves, and were not scrupulous about doing so at the expense of their employers. Many, too, had witnessed, and others had heard of, the cruelties perpetrated by the condottieri, who had constituted themselves the guardians of the children of Gian Galeazzo Visconti. But they knew, on the other hand, they could derive but little assistance from those from whose talents they had nothing to dread. Sforza belonged to the first of these two orders of captains, and the two Piccinini were then included in the latter. Having to make up their choice between the two, they preferred to encounter the distant peril resulting from the dangerous talents of the former, to the risk of immediately losing their liberty through the incapacity of the latter. They therefore sent to Sforza, requesting him to act for them in the same manner, and on the same conditions, as he had promised their late duke.

Sforza for some time might have entertained expectations that his own party would gain the upper hand at Milan, and that he might thus appear to have acquired the ducal crown rather by the free choice of

the people, than in right of the somewhat doubtful title of his wife, or the will of a fickle old man. It must therefore have been a sore disappointment to him to find that those whom he had expected to rule were determined on governing themselves. But, at the present moment, he had not the means of maintaining his own rights; and he well knew that, when a man wishes to get the rule of a city or state, he cannot forward his designs better than by commanding an army in their defence.* After receiving this message, his first step was to advance to Cremona, where he might join his own forces with those that had been left by the duke, and afterwards act as appeared most expedient. When he started from his position adjoining Parma, the inhabitants of that city refused to let him pass through, but at the same time sent him ambassadors to declare their willingness to remain the allies of the Milanese. However much he might have coveted the possession of the city, he was thus deprived of any pretext of taking it by force; and as he was not yet in a situation to act without disguise for himself, he left them unmolested, and, making a circuit of their walls, passed on to Cremona. By his timely arrival there he secured the allegiance of many who had appeared to be wavering. He was first met by Orlando Palavicino, a man whose fidelity had on several previous occasions appeared more than doubtful, but who now received him with every mark of friendship, and promised him his assistance. The Piccinini too, who had been coqueting

* MACHIAVELLI, *Principe*, cap. xiv.

with the various contending parties, seeing what they could get for themselves, were seized with a most salutary terror at his presence; and though they had had the foolhardiness to promise to take Crema and Cremona for the Venetians, he hesitated not to take them into his service. And the army of the latter, who, since their victory at Casale, had committed depredations all through the country without the fear of opposition, now confined themselves almost entirely within the precincts of their camp.

In all his preceding campaigns in Lombardy, Sforza had been fighting the battles of others. He was, therefore, more anxious to obtain glory and spoil, the usual fruit of a victory in those days, than to adhere to a well-devised plan of operations, so as to secure the object of his employers. In his wars in the March of Ancona, he had generally to contend against great superiority of numbers, and was obliged patiently to watch the movements of his enemies to take advantage of any oversight. This may account for the fact that hitherto, at least, he was more deserving of praise for his conduct on the field than for any great skill in the plan of a campaign. But now, though he was nominally commanding the armies of others, he considered himself in some measure fighting for himself. We shall henceforward behold him exhibiting great skill in selecting the plan of operations, and great steadiness in adhering to one that he had once chosen; never deviating therefrom under the hopes of gaining an ephemeral advantage; never attacking, except for some definite purpose; and

never gaining a victory that he did not turn to the best possible account.

The cities that commanded the bridges over the Po and its tributaries, he justly considered as the most important positions in Lombardy. Their possession would not only secure him against the approach of any enemy from the south, but would, as before observed, cut off one great channel of communication between the Venetian army and their home. It was therefore of the greatest importance to him to be master of the whole line of the Po, for effecting which he was able to make Cremona the basis of his operations. Before setting about this, however, he advanced to the vicinity of Lodi, to reconnoitre the position of his enemy, and shortly afterwards laid siege to San Columbano, which had so lately fallen into their hands. But here he received intelligence of events that, to him at least, were of the greatest consequence. The city of Pavia, most important from its situation near the junction of the Ticino and the Po, was nominally subject to, or allied with, the Milanese; but a considerable diversity of opinion existed among the citizens as to who should be their rulers: they still retained some of their ancient jealousy of the latter, and there now seemed too much reason to fear that, following the example of their neighbours at Piacenza, they would revolt to the Venetians. There were two persons who endeavoured to turn the state of things to Sforza's advantage: the first was one Sceva Curtes, a man of much boldness and ability, who had formerly been in his service in the March of

Ancona; the other was Agnes Mayna, the mother of Bianca Maria. The first was not long in furnishing his former master with the intelligence of what was going on, and endeavoured to plead his cause with the citizens; while the latter began making offers to Bolognino, the commander of the citadel. This person had always been attached to the party of Braccio; but as they were now without a head, he seemed to have no objection to make a friend to himself of the opposite chief. He therefore promised to comply with the requests of the lady, on the following conditions: first, that he should be fairly adopted into the party of Sforza, and be treated as if he had borne with him the brunt of his fortunes; and, secondly, that he should receive with the title of count the sovereignty of the castle of San Angelo, the place where he had been born.

Sforza at first hesitated about taking immediate possession of the city. On the one hand, he was fearful of incurring the displeasure of the Milanese. On the other hand, he recollected that there were several other candidates for it; that if he made any long delay in closing with the offers that were now made to him, it would probably fall into the hands of either the Venetians or the duke of Savoy; and that in either case it would be a sore thorn in the side of the future possessors of Lombardy. The Milanese, having received information of these offers, sent ambassadors to his camp, reminding him of his engagements with them, and representing to him that it should be his object to bring under their rule all the cities and states that had been

subject to the duke. To this message, Francesco, who was as well skilled in the arts of diplomacy as in those of war, replied that for his part he would do all that lay in his power; that, at the same time, he thought it proper to inform them that the Pavians, divided among themselves in most respects, were agreed only in one thing—that they would not be subject to them, and that they might very possibly choose a foreigner, or even an enemy, for their ruler; that it surely was better for them that Pavia should fall into his hands than into those of one who might employ it to their injury; that, besides being important in a military view from its situation, it contained all the stores and camp equipments that had belonged to Philip, and would afford him no small assistance in his attempts to deliver them from their enemies. These answers appeared far from satisfactory to the ambassadors; but, such as they were, they promised to report them to the Milanese. And Sforza, having thus explained and defended his motives, thought that the present opportunity was not to be lost; and after the departure of the ambassadors, he received in his camp a deputation of eight citizens from Pavia, to treat about the surrender of the city.

In the mean time, his relation and opponent, Michael Attendolo, was not ignorant of what was going on, and hoped to divert him from his present enterprise by bringing him to battle. But it was in vain that he made many manœuvres and counter-manœuvres in his presence: the possession of a city was now of much greater importance to Sforza than the gaining a victory;

and though he seemed fully prepared for any attempt of the enemy, he refused to be drawn from his position. The deputation, after having remained with him one day, returned to Pavia, accompanied by two of his officers, who were received with great acclamations by the citizens, and formally put into possession both of the town and of the territory. But Bolognino, the commandant, refused to deliver the citadel to any one except to the count himself. It is not likely that the latter would, under any circumstances, have allowed any considerations of the interests of his employers to stand in the way of his own fortunes; but as he had just concluded a treaty with the garrison of St Columbano, in which they promised to surrender if within eight days they were not relieved, he was now able to repair to Pavia without any detriment to them. His first act, after his arrival thither, was to go in public to the cathedral and to return thanks to the Almighty for his fortune. He then repaired to the citadel, which was given up to him by Bolognino; and having found there, besides the military stores, a considerable treasure, he rewarded the commandant with a handsome present from the latter. On the following day he was formally proclaimed sovereign of the town and the surrounding territory, under the title of count. Like a good captain, he lost no time in making the best military use of his new acquisition. He first despatched soldiers to some of the outlying fortresses in the neighbourhood of the Milanese and of the territory of the duke of Savoy, and then sent eight galleys down the river to intercept all

communication between the Venetian army and the town of Piacenza. Having thus secured to himself the possession of this most important place, and taken measures for the future, he returned to his camp on the third day after his departure.

The Milanese, though they must have been in some degree prepared for this step on the part of their general, when they heard that he had actually taken it, could not conceal their indignation. They even went so far as to send messengers to his camp, saying that they would make peace on any terms with their avowed enemies, rather than have their armies managed by men in whom they could place no reliance. As if to show that they were in earnest, they despatched an ambassador to treat with the Venetians. But several events soon occurred, which made them think better of the resolutions adopted in a moment of passion. Their anger had been in some degree appeased by receiving possession of the castle of San Colombano from their general. The Venetians refused to treat with them, except on terms which they deemed it impossible to accept. Their neighbours, as well as the descendants of those who had been subjected by Galeazzo or Philip Visconti, began to take advantage of their present distress to make encroachments on their frontiers, or to assert their independence. Lionel, the son of Nicholas the marquis of Ferrara, got possession of two castles in his neighbourhood, and began to threaten Parma. Two of the minor barons in the neighbourhood of that town had taken other strong places in the vicinity. The

Genoese had crossed their natural boundary of the Apennines, and, having taken the fortresses on the frontiers of Lombardy, were menacing Tortona and Alessandria. The duke of Savoy also had sent troops to occupy the latter place as well as Novara, and would probably have taken Pavia if he had not been anticipated by Sforza. The inhabitants of several important places, allured by his promise of exempting them from all tribute, had revolted to him. The marquis of Montferrat began to take measures to recover his position as an independent sovereign of Italy. They were also pressed by a more formidable rival, who might, on a future occasion, bring to bear against them the whole power of France. The possession of the cities, which had been given to the king of France in the preceding year, whetted the appetite of that monarch for extending his dominions in the country in which he had obtained a footing; and he now claimed the duchy of Milan for his nephew, Charles duke of Orleans, the son of Valentina, the sister of Filippo Maria. And his general, Rinaldo, began to assert his claims with the force which he had some time before brought to Asti, originally destined for the assistance of Philip.

This last-mentioned enemy appeared to the Milanese the most formidable of all. The party that was still termed Guelf in the cities of Lombardy retained a sort of traditionary dislike to the supremacy of Milan. They were all much attached to the French, from their connection with the monarchs of Anjou, who had so long been the leaders of their party, and they were suffi-

ciently strong to afford considerable aid to any of their enemies. As in any country except Italy the illegitimacy of Bianca Maria would have been a fatal barrier to her claims, those of Charles, according to the laws of succession, which are usually respected north of the Alps, would have been the most valid of all the aspirants. The Milanese might, indeed, assert their rights to self-government, and say that the Visconti had reigned only with their consent; but such reasoning would have weighed but little with the monarch of a country in which the rights of man had not as yet been discussed; and though they might affect to despise the French as barbarians, they feared that they were as superior in fighting as they were inferior to them in civilisation. Many of the places between Asti and Alessandria, either from attachment or fear, had gone over to them; and several, who dreaded the yoke of a foreigner, sent to Sforza to beg for assistance. The Milanese then accosted him in a very different tone from that in which they addressed him some time before, and requested him to advise them in their dilemma. To the former he sent word not to be afraid of the French; for that, though they might appear more than men at the first onset, yet, if they met them with a stout resistance, they would find them more easily vanquished than women.*

* It is curious how often this remark has been made concerning the Gauls as well as the French, who now live in the country they formerly occupied. Cæsar, Livy, and Tacitus, frequently advert to this characteristic in the former; and Machiavelli (*Discorsi*, lib. iii. c. 36) endeavours to explain why it has always been observed in the latter, by ascribing it to great impetuosity, and absence of all discipline. It need hardly be added that the latter

The latter he recommended to send what forces they could into the territory of Alessandria, to defend the places that still remained faithful to them; and added, that he had no doubt but that many of those that had revolted from them would return to their allegiance in the winter. He himself sent ambassadors to Rinaldo of Dresnay, the French general, requesting him to abstain from making any attempt on the towns that either belonged to him, or were in any manner under his protection. He reminded him of the claims he had on the king of France, from the circumstance of his father and himself having been the principal supporters of the kings of Anjou in their contests for the crown of Naples, and of his having lost all his fiefs in that kingdom from his attachment to their cause. And he concluded by saying that if, nevertheless, Rinaldo, unmindful of all the services he had rendered to his monarch, in any way molested him, he would bring the whole of his forces to bear against him. These arguments weighed with the French commander, who, influenced either by his friendship for, or his fear of, Sforza, made no attempt to annoy him.

In the mean time, the inhabitants of the town of Tortona, seeing how all parties respected the possessions of Sforza, sent to make offers of their sovereignty to him. But as that place was at some distance from the spot which was to be the scene of his operations, he did not deem its possession of sufficient importance to risk

part, both the observation and explanation, is totally inapplicable to the more modern French armies.

another breach with his employers. He therefore wisely made a show of declining it; but he sent thither a person whom he knew to be most attached to himself to receive it for the Milanese. He also requested Rinaldo to respect it as being one of the places protected by him. And as the Milanese had, in accordance with his advice, sent a force of two thousand men to watch the movements of the French between Asti and Alessandria, he was now able to turn his undivided attention to following up his operations on the river, the command of which would be of such consequence to whomsoever might be destined to be ruler of Lombardy.

He was already in possession of two most important places in the vicinity of the king of rivers—namely, Pavia and Cremona. But the occupation of Piacenza by the Venetians not only entirely prevented any water-communications being carried on between these two places, and endangered those that might be attempted by land, but, what was a most important circumstance in these days when no body of men could be depended upon, it gave his enemies every opportunity of carrying on intrigues in each of these cities. It was obvious, then, that its reduction was of the utmost consequence to him, and he already had his army at no very great distance from it in the vicinity of San Columbano. The Milanese were of course more desirous that he should relieve them of the presence of an enemy at Lodi, and the Venetian commander seemed anxious to engage his attention in that quarter to divert him from Piacenza. But he pursued his plans with a steadiness

that contrasts strangely with his conduct in former campaigns. On one occasion, indeed, he was wellnigh foiled, either by the incapacity or the treachery of his generals. Hints having been made to him of some meditated treachery at Cremona, he deemed it advisable to repair thither, leaving the Piccinini in the command of his army. After his departure a report was spread among his troops that the Venetian general, having been informed of his absence, was about to attack them, whereon the Piccinini, either through incapacity or cowardice, retired in some disorder to Pizzighettone. When intelligence of this was brought to him, he was in no small degree annoyed; not so much, perhaps, on account of any actual damage that it was likely to cause, as from the loss of the prestige of the invincibility of his troops. This prestige, which was of such powerful aid to him both in battle and in diplomacy, he determined to redeem. Accordingly, he lost no time in rallying his army, and bringing them to the vicinity of the enemy, who had all this time remained quietly encamped near Lodi. Both armies were drawn up on opposite hills, within a mile of one another. But though frequent challenges passed on each side, neither would descend to the intervening valley to allow the other to attack to advantage; and after sunset they both retired to their quarters. Sforza now thought that he had done enough for his honour; and as it was already the beginning of October, he well knew that, if he meant to take Piacenza that year, he had no time to lose; so he brought his army there, and began the siege in right earnest.

His desire to get possession of that city was in no small degree enhanced by the great difficulties in his way, the overcoming of which, he thought, would in no small degree add to his already well-established reputation. The city is situated in a plain about half a mile south of the Po. It was then divided into four quarters, in each of which there was a gate. The circuit of its walls was not much less than that of Milan: they were remarkable for their strength; they were surrounded by a deep ditch, and contained many towers at short distances from each other. It was garrisoned by a force of two thousand horse, and the same number of foot. It contained a great abundance of forage, provisions, and military stores of every description. Among the inhabitants were six thousand men of arms, almost all determined enemies of Sforza; and as they knew that they had little mercy to expect from the Milanese, they were all resolved to fight to the last. Their hopes were considerably elated by the setting in of the autumn rains, which would of course retard the operations of the besiegers. Sforza found that the number of those whom he could bring to attack the place was not greater than that of its defendants—a circumstance which, considering the great disadvantages at which besiegers always fight, might seem to render his success almost hopeless. But he was determined that before the end of the year Piacenza should be his. His first object, of course, was to prevent all communication between the besieged and their allies, more especially as he had heard that the Venetian general, who was as

well aware as himself of the importance of the place, had meditated sending thither reinforcements. For this purpose he made four divisions of his army, and assigned to each the custody of one of the gates of the city. He made level the surface of the intervening country, so that nothing should prevent their immediate junction, should it at any time seem necessary. In making these arrangements he was careful to assign to the treacherous Piccinini the command of the southern gate of the city, the quarter from which he least expected an attack.

Michael Attendolo had four galleons on the Po, by which he meant to have sent the promised reinforcements. But this was now rendered impossible by the strength of the blockading force. There remained but two ways by which he could do anything for the besieged, either by sending a fleet up the Po from Venice, or by pressing the Milanese in a manner so vigorous as to compel their general to relinquish his present design, and to come to their relief. The advanced season of the year would of course much retard any assistance that could be rendered to them in the first mode; and even if his fleet were in the river, the bridge of Cremona presented an obstacle which would at least require time to surmount; so he determined on vigorously following up his operations in the vicinity of his enemy's capital. He therefore again laid siege to San Columbano, which he had already taken and lost in the course of the year; and having established his headquarters there, he scoured the whole of the country between the

cities of Pavia and Milan. He was not without hopes that the former city would have revolted to him; but the inhabitants, influenced, it is said, more by the fear than the love of their present ruler, remained faithful to their engagements.

Sforza, however, was not so easily to be moved from his position; but, with a view of keeping the enemy in check without raising the siege of the city, he began to build a bridge over the Po, immediately above the head-quarters of his army. The Milanese sent messengers to him, urging him, in the strongest manner, to come to their relief; but to all their solicitations he replied, he could do nothing until he had completed the bridge—a work which not only was necessary for the present, but would also be of the greatest use to them in the subsequent conduct of the war. He requested them to send him money and materials, of which he knew they had abundance at Lago Maggiore; and promised that, if he had all things at hand, he would be able to finish the bridge in six days—a shorter space of time than it would require to bring his troops to their assistance by any other route. There was much truth in all this; but free states seldom act with vigour and promptitude in war; and the Milanese, having for a century and a half been accustomed to obey others, had even less unity of action than most republics. However much they might have desired the possession of Piacenza, there were not a few who dreaded to see it fall into the hands of Sforza. They therefore sent to him to state that they knew from experience that it was utterly impossible that the

bridge could be completed within the time that he had stated; that he must come to their relief without farther loss of time; and that they could not think of furnishing him with assistance for the prosecution of a work which he must immediately relinquish. But he well knew the instability of the popular governments at Milan; that they had nobody but him to whom they could cry in their distress; and that if they saw no chance of relief until he had finished his undertaking, they must give in to his wishes. He therefore continued his operations, and sent a fresh embassy to his employers to urge his former requests.

These measures produced the desired effect. He still had many partisans at Milan, and experience taught the others that there was nothing for it but to give in to him. As soon as he had got all that he required, he prosecuted his work with such assiduity that, contrary to the general expectation, he had it finished within the time he had mentioned. While he was thus engaged, he artfully gave out that he intended, without loss of time, to bring the whole of his forces against the Venetians, leaving merely a few galleons on the river to prevent reinforcements being sent to the besieged. These reports so completely deceived the Venetian general that, recalling his troops from their predatory incursions, he concentrated them on the far side of the Lambro, and ordered different bodies of infantry to cross the Po by night to reinforce the garrison at Piacenza. In the latter attempt, however, he was completely frustrated by the vigilance of his adversaries. Thus had the very

fear of Sforza's name done for the Milanese all that they had desired his presence to effect. The Venetian army was expecting him with fear and trembling at Lodi; the Piacenzans were disappointed of assistance; and he himself was able to prosecute the siege with all necessary vigour.

After the besiegers had made one or two ineffectual attempts against the city walls, an event occurred in their camp which considerably assisted their general in his future operations. An uncouth-looking fellow, dressed in rags, and to all appearance a simple-minded countryman, was caught while endeavouring by stealth to make his way across the wall of the city. When brought before the commander-in-chief, he was condemned to the fate of all spies. But he, like the one found by Ulysses and Diomede, was willing to purchase his life on any conditions. Though he had not in his family residence brass, gold, and highly wrought iron, to give to his captors, he had it in his power to render them the most effectual service. He acknowledged that he was carrying letters from the Venetians to the commandants of the garrison, and he proposed that he should continue to be the bearer of these communications, and place them all at the disposal of the besiegers. Those that he had about his person he immediately delivered. After considerable difficulty in deciphering them, (in which, among others, Simoneta, the biographer of Sforza, was employed,) it was discovered therefrom that the Venetian general encouraged the besieged to hold out to the last, informing them that a fleet was

shortly about to come to their assistance; and that, lest they should be delayed in their ascent of the river by the bridge of Cremona, he intended to make a sudden descent upon it and destroy it. The general of the Milanese and their allies, more humane than the Grecian heroes, not only spared the spy's life when he got all this information from him, but even rewarded his services with money; and having promised to pay him hereafter, on the condition of his fulfilling his stipulations, he resealed the letters in the best manner he could, and allowed him to make his way with them into the city. The spy soon returned therefrom, bearing the answers of the besieged, in which they declared that they were by no means hard pressed, and would have no difficulty in holding out till the arrival of the fleet; and further suggesting to Michael the expediency of making another diversion in their favour, by attacking Sepri, the only part of the Milanese territory that yet remained undevastated. Sforza was so terribly afraid of their complying with this last piece of advice that he retained the letters in which allusion was made to it, but sent the spy forward with the others. When he arrived at the headquarters of the Venetians with the letters from the Piacenzans, he was asked how he had made his way through the enemy's camp. To this question he replied that he had met there an officer of Sforza's who had formerly been his master, and now passed him off as his servant, and promised to do so on all future occasions on the condition of receiving a reward from the Venetians. They gave perfect credence to his tale,

and intrusted him to bring two hundred florins of gold to his supposed benefactor. And as the same man continued to be employed in the same service, Sforza had the most perfect knowledge of all that was going on both in the city of the besieged and in the camp of his enemies.

An opportunity soon occurred, in which he was able to turn the information thus received to the most beneficial account. One of Michael's letters apprised him that he had just passed the Adda by the bridge at Cassano, (which had been of signal service to him during the whole of the campaign,) and was marching direct to Cremona. As the garrison left in the town was not sufficient to resist this force, he immediately despatched thither a considerable body of cavalry and infantry under two of his ablest officers, and he himself descended the river in a galleon. He arrived at the post of danger just in the nick of time. The Venetians were already seen by the people in the citadel of Cremona to approach the bridge with all the implements required for its destruction; but on their arrival there, they found a body of infantry, sufficiently strong to guard its approach, placed in front of it, and beheld themselves threatened by an attack of cavalry in their flank and rear. A battle soon commenced in the plain between the city and the bridge, in which the Venetian commander found all his attempts to take possession of the latter ineffectual. After fighting for some time, he beheld the lofty cockade of Sforza, and recognised the sonorous tone of his kinsman's voice issuing the commands to his men, whereon he retired in

some confusion upon Crema, marvelling much at the wonderful tact and good fortune of the man who always managed to be at the post of danger the very moment he was wanted.

While these events were taking place on the Po, others occurred in Piedmont, singularly illustrative both of the intriguing spirit of the times, and of the tact of the man whose history has been chosen to illustrate them. It has been already stated that the Milanese had, in accordance with his advice, sent two thousand horse to keep in check the French army in the territory of Alessandria. In the mean time, the French general, Rinaldo of Dresnay, was engaged in the siege of Bosco, a town a little to the south of Alessandria, and sent to Sforza to beg that, as a token of his amity to his countrymen, he would give him assistance. In his reply to this request, he made no allusion either to his engagements with the Milanese, or to the advice he had given to them; but he endeavoured to represent to him the folly of attempting to reduce such a strongly fortified place with a comparatively small body of men, and urged him to retreat upon Asti, lest Bosco should prove a scene of as great disaster to the French as Alessandria had formerly been to the Germans. Much about this time the Milanese determined to relieve Bosco, and sent orders to Sforza to send them part of his forces to assist in their attack upon the man with whom he had just been carrying on these negotiations. It need hardly be said that he, intent as he was upon the reduction of Piacenza, and anxious to maintain appearances with

Rinaldo, declined to do this. The Milanese troops were, however, soon joined by a considerable body of volunteers from Alessandria and the neighbouring cities, under an old man of the name of Gian Trotto, and they were preparing to attack the camp of Rinaldo with force. Before the action commenced, the Alessandrian volunteers began crying out, "Carne, carne!" On Rinaldo, who happened to be in the part of the French army that was immediately contiguous to them, asking what this word meant, he was given to understand that it was a war-cry of the Italians, denoting blood and murder. When this became known among his soldiers, it was impossible to restrain them, and they immediately attacked and routed that part of the army opposite to them. They followed the fugitives as far as Tortona; and, to the great terror and surprise of the Italians, who had not been accustomed to see much blood shed in their wars, and who valued victories not as a means of destroying their enemy's forces, but of enriching themselves with booty and ransom, they gave no quarter during the pursuit or afterwards. On the other side of the army, however, the regular troops of the Milanese, under Bartolomeo Collio, were successful, and they were unable to prevent the citizens of Alessandria from avenging the slaughter of their countrymen by a cruel massacre of the prisoners. Rinaldo himself was taken, but he escaped the fate of his less fortunate soldiers. Collio's next step was to attack the town of Tortona, because it was known to be well affected towards, and supposed to be actually in posses-

sion of Sforza. A strange epoch, in which one general, certainly with the connivance, and possibly at the instigation of his employers, made use of his soldiers to injure the man who was actually at that time at the head of their armies! The city, either because it was unprovided with means of resistance, or because Sforza did not wish actually to avow himself its owner, surrendered at once. Its loss was unimportant, but it gave Sforza an insight into the real disposition of the Milanese towards him, and showed him how little he could expect from them, if they were once freed from their enemies.

Francesco, while thus watching all that was passing around him, continued the siege of Piacenza without intermission. By the middle of December a considerable breach was effected in the walls by means of the artillery, which appears then, for the first time in Italian warfare, to have been effectually employed for that purpose. He then determined upon storming it. On the 15th of the month he called a council of war, and represented to his chief captains that, as the season was far advanced, Piacenza must be taken on the following day. His words were amply responded to. A universal enthusiasm spread through the army. Many who had deserted, or who had been absent on pillaging excursions, returned. Several of the country people joined them. The appetites of all were whetted by the expectation of the booty they were to get in the city.

The dispositions for the attack were most skilfully made. A small fleet was sent, under the command of Charles of Gonzaga, up the Trebbia, a river which flows from the direction of Piacenza, and which was

then so swollen that it afforded water for the vessels up to the very city. The men were ordered to scale the walls, and make themselves masters of the turrets from the masts of the vessels. Sforza directed another attack to be made on the turrets adjoining the southern gate, while he selected the troops on whom he had most reliance for the assault on the breach, which he determined to command in person. The two first attacks were designed as feints, to divert the attention of the defenders from the breach; and though those to whom they were intrusted performed their part as they were ordered, and the soldiers fought with great bravery, neither made any impression at first. But the third attack, though resisted with the most desperate courage, was completely successful. For a moment the commandants of the place were astounded at the suddenness of the assault, and scarcely knew from which quarter their real danger proceeded; but they soon organised both the soldiers and the citizens for the defence of the breach, and prepared to contest every inch of ground with the aggressors. The latter, however, pushed on till they found an unexpected obstacle in a new trench, which had just been constructed around the walls. As soon as Sforza perceived this, he ordered each soldier to take with him a faggot for the purpose of filling it up; but this so much retarded their movements that they were unable to face the javelins and balls of the besieged. Fortunately for them there still remained a palisade, which had been constructed for the defence of the men employed in digging it, and which was strong enough to admit of their passing over. But here again

they were repulsed by the missiles which were showered upon them from behind the fragment of the wall; and it is not probable that they would ever have arrived at the breach, if Sforza had not adopted the bold, and then entirely novel, proceeding of ordering his men to lie down, and discharging his cannon over their heads at the wall which afforded shelter to the defenders.* The wall fell with a terrible crash upon those who were posted behind it. Most of those who escaped destruction were confounded; and the few whose nerves were unshaken were unable to resist the soldiers, who now marched in an unbroken line across the bridge. For a short time, indeed, the tide of the victors was arrested by Sforza having his horse killed under him; but on his appearing remounted and unhurt, their energy was restored. When, however, they had passed the breach, a formidable difficulty seemed still to await them. There was in the city a considerable body of cavalry, against whom, as they could not enter it in any sort of order, it would be impossible to make a stand. On beholding this they halted by the walls, and cried out for horses as lustily as King Richard. But this danger soon disappeared. Thaddeus of Este, despairing of ultimately saving the city, retreated with a small body of soldiers to the citadel. The walls were scaled from the river; the city

* A similar measure was adopted by Sir Thomas Graham on the taking of San Sebastian in 1813. The shot of the besiegers then passed two feet over the heads of the assailants, without doing them the slightest injury. Of the shot discharged on the occasion referred to in the text, Sforza's secretary says, "Supra armatorum militum cervices evolans multorum cristas corraserat." The danger which seemed to threaten the soldiers at each period was, of course, in inverse proportion to the degree of perfection attained in the science of gunnery.

gates were opened, and Sforza galloped in at the head of a considerable body of horse. Shortly afterwards the garrison surrendered, and the citizens were abandoned to the mercy of the victors.

On no one occasion was Sforza more unmindful of the advice of his father, to treat the vanquished with mercy. All accounts agree as to the extent of the injuries inflicted on the unfortunate citizens. Even Sforza's secretary and biographer, who in general is partial to his character, allows that he made no attempt to save them from the cupidity or the revenge of the soldiers. It would be difficult, he says, to give any idea of the nature and extent of the devastation that took place on the following night; to describe how the soldiers quarrelled and fought among themselves for the booty; to say what murders were committed among the many thousand friends and foes who were in the city. The victors, as well as the vanquished, were murdered and robbed. Churches and houses alike were ransacked; virgins and matrons were violated indiscriminately. The annalist of Italy makes use of the words, "that the people who committed these iniquities appeared more like Turks than Christians"—a strong expression, when we consider the dread which, in his time, the former inspired throughout Christendom. After a time, though it does not exactly appear when, Sforza expressed some wish to protect the property of the churches and monasteries, and the persons of the nuns.* Thus, however much his reputation as a general

* Muratori seems to doubt either the fact of Sforza's having issued an order to this effect, or his sincerity in wishing it to be obeyed. He cites

gained by the siege, his character as a man, weighed even by the standard of that age, was considerably damaged by the use that he made of his victory.

Of the pillage that followed the capture of Piacenza, M. Sismondi remarks, that it showed in an odious light the then system of war, on the humanity of which the Italians of that day so much prided themselves, inasmuch as the peaceful inhabitants were liable to the most frightful sufferings, while the mercenary soldier could scarcely be said to be exposed to any hazard. But in a siege,* which occurred in the memory of many men now living, in which success was attained by an extraordinary expedient, similar to that employed at Piacenza, by soldiers who have been less sparing of their lives than almost any recorded in history, who have stood to be mowed down like grass, or advanced with fixed bayonets to the mouth of the cannon, the capture of the city was followed by excesses of a not less heinous nature than those committed by the Italian soldiers on the occasion commemorated. The comparison of the two events may, in the words made use of by Mr Alison with reference to the more recent one, suggest the mournful doubt, whether all mankind are not at bottom the same, in point of tendency to crime, when exposed to the influence of the same temptations; and whether many evils do not lie beneath the boasted glories of modern civilisation.

three historians, who relate the unrestrained commission of the crimes which it was designed to prevent.

* Siege of San Sebastian, 1813.

CHAPTER II.

INVASION OF TUSCANY BY ALPHONSO—FORCED TO RETIRE AFTER TWO CAMPAIGNS.—PIACENZA CONTINUES TO BE PILLAGED.—POSITION OF THE VENETIANS.—INTRIGUES AGAINST SFORZA AT MILAN—HIS SUCCESSES IN THE FIELD.—VENETIANS ATTACK THE BRIDGE OF CREMONA—HEROIC CONDUCT OF BIANCA MARIA.—SFORZA HOLDS A COUNCIL OF WAR—IS AT FIRST PREVENTED BY THE MILANESE GOVERNMENT FROM MARCHING TO CREMONA, BUT AFTERWARDS RECEIVES PERMISSION TO ACT AS HE PLEASES.—DIFFICULTIES WITH THE PICCININI.—SFORZA'S ADDRESS TO HIS GENERALS AT CASALE.—DESTRUCTION OF THE VENETIAN FLEET.—GREAT AVIDITY OF THE SOLDIERS FOR PLUNDER.—SFORZA RAISES THE SIEGE OF CASALE.—ORDERS OF THE MILANESE GOVERNMENT.—SFORZA INVESTS CARAVAGGIO.—INDECISIVE ACTION WITH THE VENETIANS.—POSITION OF THE TWO ARMIES NEAR CARAVAGGIO—AND VIEWS OF THE RESPECTIVE GENERALS.—COUNCIL OF WAR IN THE CAMP OF THE VENETIANS.—THEY DECIDE ON ATTACKING SFORZA—ARE REPULSED IN GREAT CONFUSION—THEIR OWN CAMP IS TAKEN—ALL THEIR STORES AND ACCOUTREMENTS, AND A GREAT NUMBER OF PRISONERS, FALL INTO THE HANDS OF THE ENEMY.

IT was fortunate for Sforza that, while the events just narrated were taking place, his old enemy, Alphonso, had sufficient on hand to detain him elsewhere. He had never been friendly with the Florentines; he had long desired an opportunity to carry out the project of subjecting them, entertained by Ladislaus at the end of the last century; and he determined to take advantage of the present time, when the Venetians and Milanese had too much to do to interfere in his projects. It was not difficult for him to find an excuse to justify his conduct. The Florentines were the allies of the Venetians, with whom *his* ally, the duke of Milan, had been

at war; and though the latter was now dead, he affected to consider his treaties with him binding. Under pretence of fulfilling his engagements, he marched into Tuscany. His first step was to take the fortress of Cennina, whence he proceeded to lay waste the territory of Sienna. The Florentines, though surprised, were by no means confounded by the suddenness of the attack. They created a council of ten for the management of the war: they provided themselves with an army, and retook Cennina. The king of Naples having lost this place, and finding that its inhabitants and those of all the surrounding places remained faithful to his enemies, invaded the territory of Volterra. Thence he passed into the neighbourhood of Pisa, several of the strongholds of which were allowed by the leading men of the state to fall into his hands. He then made an attempt to reduce Campighlio, but relinquished the siege just about the time that Sforza succeeded in taking Piacenza. After having left what he considered a sufficient force in all the places that had fallen into his hands, he retired to winter quarters in the vicinity of Sienna.

Meanwhile the Florentines engaged the services of two additional captains, Frederick, the lord of Urbino, and Sforza's son-in-law, Sigismund Malatesta. By compelling them to carry on their operations in the winter, they retook several of the places they had lost. The king of Naples resumed his operations in spring. After the hostile armies had manœuvred in the presence of one another, not far from Campighlio, Alphonso directed

his steps to Piombino. As that town is situated on the sea at the extremity of a promontory, it was evident that, if once master of it, he could have supplies sent thither from Aragon or Naples, and make it the basis of his future operations against Tuscany. With this view he invested it strongly by land and by sea. The Florentines attempted to send four gallies to its relief from Leghorn, which were unfortunately captured by a superior fleet of the enemy's. But the inhabitants were resolved to hold out to the last, and Alphonso saw the necessity of collecting the whole of his force to reduce it. He was followed thither by the army of the Florentines, who determined to watch his operations, and to seek an opportunity of forcing him, if possible, to raise the siege. Thus had both parties sufficient on hands to prevent their appearing for another year at least in Lombardy.

This campaign died, as it were, a natural death. It was not long before the insalubrity of the marshy shores of Tuscany, always developed by the heats of the summer and autumn,* and the difficulty of procuring supplies, produced their due effects upon the health and

* The fever generated by the malaria in this part of Italy, is alluded to by Dante in the following lines:—

"Qual dolor fora, se degli spedali
Di Valdichiana tra l' Luglio e' l Settembre
E di Maremma e di Sardigna i mali
Fossero in una fossa tutti insembre."†

† "As were the torments, if each lazar-house
Of Valdichiana in the sultry time
'Twixt July and September, with the isle
Sardinia, and Maremma's pestilent fen,
Had heaped their maladies all in one foss together."—*Inf.* xxix. 45.

spirits of both armies. The Florentines were the first to retire from their position; but having done this, they cheered their troops by leading them to the capture of many places that still remained in the hands of the enemy. Alphonso sent to Florence to make propositions of peace, and offered to leave Tuscany on the condition of receiving fifty thousand florins of gold, and the town of Piombino. But these offers were, through the instrumentality of Neri Capponi, rejected with indignation. Upon this the king, finding that the malaria fever had already carried off ten thousand of his soldiers, and had rendered many others almost unfit for service, retired to his own dominions, vowing vengeance against the citizens who had refused either to surrender or to pay for their liberty.

In Lombardy, Piacenza continued to be pillaged for forty days. The Po afforded such a facility for carrying off the booty on rafts, that the citizens were stripped not only of their treasure and ornaments, but even of the commonest articles of furniture. Many of them were sold as slaves; and a body of two thousand infantry, who had marched thither before they were aware of the catastrophe, shared the same fate. Never after that time did the city regain its former position in Italy. The victors frequently fought among themselves about the booty, and their general had no small difficulty in preventing his army sustaining a severer loss from these internal quarrels than it had from the valour of the defenders. At last he restored order by appointing the captive commandant, Thaddeus of Este,

a judge to whom all such matters of dispute were to be referred. He afterwards treated him with commendable generosity in restoring him to liberty.

Meantime the Venetian army took up its winter quarters in the country north of the Po, between the Oglio, the Mincio, and the Adige. An armament, which had been destined for the relief of Piacenza, had arrived at Casale. Thus the whole of the territory around Cremona was occupied by Sforza's enemies. His own troops were cantoned to the south of the Po, and he had not the inclination, even if he had the power, to resume operations before the return of the season. But he took the precaution of fortifying the bridge of Cremona, by the erection of a battery and other means. His subjects thus continued to receive their supplies from the side of the river without any molestation.

The Milanese celebrated the capture of Piacenza by a triumphal procession, which lasted for three days. The place, indeed, was so important, its fortifications so strong, the mode of taking it had been so novel, and the subsequent sufferings of its inhabitants had been so great, that the event caused no small sensation throughout the peninsula. While none could fail to admire the talents, many were envious of the success, and fearful of the ambition, of the man who had taken it. After the first exultation was over, feelings of the nature of those last mentioned became predominant among the Milanese. They beheld the man who had once openly aspired to be their ruler, in possession of the city of

Pavia, which had, in the days of yore, been their rival; so that, even if he did not at present wish to menace their independence, he might at any time become a formidable neighbour. They now saw that he had succeeded in taking a city which, before its capture, was not deemed much inferior, either in population or in the strength of its fortifications, to their own; and they could not but contrast his success in that quarter with the little progress he had made in clearing the country about the Adda of their enemies. These feelings were artfully inflamed by the Piccinini and others, who never ceased to represent to them that, in supplying him with the means of carrying on the war, they were but nourishing a serpent who would one day destroy them. Being duly impressed with a sense of these dangers, they sent, on three different occasions, to treat with the Venetians. But in none of these were they able to come at once to any satisfactory conclusion; and, pending the negotiations, Sforza's agents were actively employed in stirring up the passions of the anti-Venetian party at Milan. So well did they do their work, that, when it was proposed in the city that each of the belligerent states should be allowed to retain the places of which they were then in possession, some of the leading men shouted out "War!" and the populace seized the person of the principal abettor of these pacific negotiations, and forced him to join in the cry. Thus were they compelled to continue their existing engagements with Sforza. But the Braccian party were sufficiently strong to cripple him in all his operations; and

though the government was submissive enough to him in their hour of need, they constantly sought to deprive him of the fruit of his victories. Sometimes, indeed, they did not hesitate to treat with the enemy while he was actually engaged with them. But they were dealing with one who was perfectly acquainted with all their arts of intrigue, and who, as we shall see, anticipated them by committing what would, at other times, have been deemed an inexcusable act of treachery, just at the time that they were meditating one of a similar nature.

The Milanese, in compliance with often-repeated requests of their general, equipped a considerable fleet for the defence of Cremona, and sent him reinforcements to prosecute his operations by land. Thus, though he was deserted by Charles of Gonzaga and others, who alleged that the term of their service had expired, he was able, by the beginning of May, to take the field with a force not inferior to that of the preceding year. In order to remove one cause of suspicion, his first step was to make an attempt to dislodge the enemy from their position on the Adda. His success there was all that could have been desired: he took several of the castles; the inhabitants of many of the towns, having before their eyes the fate of the unfortunate Piacenzans, surrendered to him at once; and, after a sharp contest of ten days, he made himself master of the bridge at Cassano. Of all the important places the Venetians had taken in this territory, Lodi and Caravaggio alone remained in their hands; and it is probable that these towns would soon have surrendered to the man whom

it was thought almost vain to resist, had he continued in that quarter. But the enemies who had tried in vain, in the preceding year, to take him from the siege of Piacenza by a diversion on the Adda, found no difficulty in taking him from the Adda by threatening his possessions on the Po. The Venetian fleet, under the command of Andreas Quirinus, advanced from Casale, where it had been stationed during the winter, and made a most formidable attack on the bridge of Cremona. They fastened several of the galleons to stakes in the water beneath, and posted a considerable body of infantry in a species of island or sand-bank that had been formed in the river. After they had cleared the bridge by their artillery, they attempted to scale it. Some of the men actually mounted thereon, and hoisted the standard of St Mark; and it seemed probable that, ere long, they would succeed either in taking possession of, or at least in destroying it, and capturing the galleons of the Milanese, which were lying there unmanned. The heroic conduct of Bianca Maria alone saved her husband from this great disaster. As soon as she heard of what was taking place, she repaired without delay to the post of danger, and sent orders to two of her husband's best generals, who were stationed at Pizzighettone, to come to the rescue. The guard on the bridge, animated by her presence, and, as it is said, even guided by her directions,* managed to maintain it till their arrival; after which, they soon drove the enemy from the sand-bank whence so much damage was inflicted,

* Simoneta, lib. ii.

and directed their own batteries with such effect against the fleet of the Venetians, that they were compelled to retire with loss. But the Venetians, though foiled in their attempt, continued to annoy the citizens by their incursions, and to keep the garrison in no small anxiety about the safety of the bridge.

Information of these events was duly conveyed to Sforza. If left to himself, he would immediately have repaired thither with the whole of his forces; but having already had experience how unstable was the favour of the Milanese, he was desirous, in his present position, to do nothing that could give his enemies cause to complain. With the view of appearing to act in compliance with the wishes of others, whom he hoped to bring over to his views by his eloquence, he immediately called a council of war. He there endeavoured to impress his generals with a due sense of the injury that would be inflicted on them if this bridge were once to fall into the hands of the enemy: he said that its loss would open to the Venetians the command of the Po as far as the Ticino; he reminded them of the inconveniences that Philip had formerly suffered from a similar event; he entreated them for once to lay aside all jealousy, and to put their confidence in him, and follow his advice, which was, that they should go with their whole force to Cremona, whence, having manned the galleons that were there lying empty, they should make a vigorous attack, both by land and by water, on the enemy above Casale. He added that, if he were once free from all apprehension in that quarter, he would be able to

prosecute his campaign on the Adda and on the Oglio with the greatest vigour; but that, otherwise, he might possibly waste much time without effecting anything.

Against these plausible arguments nothing could be said; even the Piccinini at first pretended to give in to them. But that which they did not dare to say in the camp, they got others to say for them at Milan. Their friends in the city cautioned the government not to be deceived by the fine words and perfidious intentions of their general. They insinuated that he was only anxious to secure his own town of Cremona, and to march thence to Brescia, which had been promised to him; and said that, if they were wise, they would not allow him to leave his present position till he had put them in possession of Lodi. Orders to this effect were sent to the camp. It was in vain that he sent remonstrances to Milan. The Braccian party, though not powerful enough to procure his dismissal, were still able to thwart him in many of his plans, and the government were firm in adhering to their former demands. Vexatious as they were, he at first thought it prudent to obey. Nevertheless, as he received continual accounts of the danger with which the city and bridge of Cremona were threatened, he sent thither two of his ablest captains with a small body of men to assist in keeping the enemy in check.

The Milanese were, like the majority of mankind, very self-willed in the time of prosperity—very humble to those who could help them in the hour of adversity. Whenever their general found himself thwarted by them

in his plans, he had merely to let them feel their need of him to make them give in to him as he wished. For this reason it may be supposed, that, while he was detained contrary to his wishes on the Adda, he was not anxious to render them any signal service. Though he was obeying their commands to the letter, the Venetian general managed to cross the Oglio and to take Mozanica. This partial success rather startled the Milanese, and the count took advantage of the sensation caused thereby, to send a friend to them to ask for unlimited powers in the conduct of the war. However suspicious they might still have been of his ultimate intentions, they thought it politic to accede to his request. On the receipt of this permission, he prepared to bring all his forces to attack the Venetian fleet near Cremona, and was ready to start on the third day after he had fixed on his plan of operations. The only danger he apprehended was from the treachery of the Piccinini; but as he did not think it prudent to come to an open rupture with them, he contented himself with placing in their camp and about their persons spies, who were to report their proceedings to him. A three days' march brought him to the vicinity of the place where the enemy had been; but on his arrival, he found they had retreated down the river to Casale Maggiore—the scene of the victory which had but two years before showed the first gleam of hope to him in the midst of his adversity.

This movement of the Venetians was a sore disappointment to Sforza, as the current immediately below Cremona would have enabled him to attack them to

great advantage, whereas in their present position they were protected both by an island and an angle of the river. He had nevertheless made up his mind to attack, and to do so with all his might. But he was still thwarted at every step by the Piccinini. Though they dared not lift up their voices against him in council, they pretended that, as they had not money for their forces, and could not procure them the necessary supplies, they were unable to proceed any farther. But he well knew that the avarice of these men was even greater than their envy of him, so he induced them to remain with him by promising them the spoil of the town of Pontioni, which it would be necessary for him to take. The unfortunate inhabitants, having heard of his intentions, and warned by the fate of the Piacenzans, sent to beg that he would receive them as friends and allies; but it was in vain. The keeping together of his army required that their property should be sacrificed; and he, though by nature neither cruel nor revengeful, was not the man to allow his principle to stand in the way of his ambition. He therefore sent them word that the time for a compromise was now past; that if they had wished to escape the fate of the conquered, they ought to have surrendered to him long ago; and that now they could do nothing better than defend themselves to the best of their ability. The city was taken almost without any show of resistance. The property of the unfortunate inhabitants was given without compunction to the soldiers, but their persons were protected. The quantity of cattle and grain that fell into the hands of the Piccinini

was so great that it ought to have removed all just cause of discontent. But as soon as they had got all that they could of the rewards of war, they began again to seek for excuses for avoiding its labours. Among other things, they complained that they had not obtained their full share of the spoil, and that they would still find it difficult to maintain their troops. But Sforza represented to them that they could get abundant supplies by means of the river; and that in the event of any success on his part, they would be still further enriched with booty. Overcome in some measure by his powers of persuasion, which Simoneta says were quite irresistible, and still more by their appetite for plunder, they consented to remain with him. And having thus managed to keep things together, for a time at least, he proceeded to act on the offensive.

His first step was to march to Casale with the whole of his army. The city was strongly fortified on the three sides which are accessible by land, and was guarded on the water by the Venetian fleet, under the command of Andreas Quirinus. Sforza lost no time in constructing batteries just where the walls adjoined the river, with which he managed to do much damage both to the fortifications and to the ships. The Milanese fleet, also, which was commanded by Blasius Asaretus, who in the year 1435 had taken Alphonso prisoner in the battle of Penzio, and which was manned by a force that had been sent from Parma for the purpose, had come from Pavia to the present scene of action. The Milanese admiral did not think himself

strong enough to attack his enemies in their present position, but he stationed himself in a spot whence he might follow them to advantage, should the batteries of Sforza compel them to relinquish it.

In the mean time, it was ascertained that Michael Attendolo had taken up his quarters with the whole of the Venetian army, within eight miles of Casale. Many of the officers of Sforza thought that they would be no match for the combined forces of Michael and of the garrison and fighting men of Casale; and his secret enemies, the Piccinini, took advantage of the apprehensions to spread panic and disaffection in the camp. To such an extent did they succeed that many said at once, that, if he did move soon, they would go home rather than fall into the hands of the Venetians. Against these machinations Sforza had nothing to oppose except his eloquence; but, trusting to it, he called together his officers, and represented to them that he surely could not be thought so destitute of skill and prudence as to ask them to remain in their present position if they were really in the danger that was represented, seeing that his fame, his family, and his fortunes would be ruined by such an act of folly; that there was nobody present who would lose more by it than himself; that they surely could not think him such a fool as to involve himself in such certain destruction; that though he was far from wishing to undervalue the force or the bravery of the enemy, their own position could not be said to be one of danger; that they were strong enough to withstand a combined

attack from the city and the country; but that, as the enemy, by so doing, would leave their fleet defenceless, he did not think that they would attempt it; that for his part he considered victory certain, and if they forced him to forego it, they would inflict a most irreparable injury, not only on themselves, but also on the cause of the Milanese; and that, if they would but remain with him two days longer, they would then see that he was not addressing them in this tone of confidence without reason.

The officers, yielding to the force of these arguments, consented to await the result; and it was not long before it convinced them of the sagacity of their general. The Venetian admiral still remained in front of the city, expecting aid from Michael Attendolo; but he was suffering more and more from the batteries that had been erected on land: the vessels themselves were almost all shattered; the men, deprived of all protection, were falling in great numbers; and it was evident that his position would soon be intolerable. Of this both Sforza and Blasius were aware; and the latter, at the instigation of his commander-in-chief, attacked the Venetian fleet one afternoon, and captured and carried off several of their galleons before evening. Quirinus saw that, if the battle were renewed on the following day, everything, both men and ships, must fall into the hands of the enemy. He endeavoured by means of signals to make the Venetian general aware of his distress; but receiving no response from him, he evacuated the fleet by night; and, setting fire to some of the ships,

let them float down among the others, that all might be consumed before the enemy could get them.

A curious scene afterwards ensued, illustrative of the human appetite for plunder. The inhabitants of the city were the first to perceive what had taken place, and they soon made their way among the deserted ships of their allies, to lay hands on what they could find. It was not long before the Milanese fleet was deserted by its crews, all of whom appeared among the smouldering ruins of their adversaries' vessels, seeking what they could get. Sforza endeavoured to prevent the soldiers joining in the scramble. He had them all drawn up in lines, and forbade them to go out of the intrenchments of the camp, under penalty of death. But all attempts to preserve order were in vain. Exaggerated reports of the booty that was to be had elsewhere, spread among them ; and it was not long before the camp was almost completely deserted.* The disorder became so great that, if Michael had chanced to make an attack on them that day, nothing could have saved them. Sforza himself was much afraid of this, more particularly as he thought that the sight of the flames and the smoke in the distance might cause him to advance to see what was going on. With a view of bringing back his soldiers, he spread about a report that the enemy was actually coming down upon them with the

* The effective force of the English army was in like manner considerably weakened after the battle of Vittoria. The number of stragglers who had left the ranks for plunder was so great that, on the following day, the Duke of Wellington complained that they lost more by the victory than the enemy had by their defeat.

whole of his force, and that, if they did not return to defend the camp, they would lose all that they had got. At the same time he sent others, who were as well aware as himself of the extent of their danger, to remove farther temptation, by continuing to set fire to the ships. It was not till the greater part of them were consumed that order was restored to the camp.

The Venetians on that day lost thirty-two galleys, a great number of transports laden with provisions, besides baggage, military stores, and equipments, to a prodigious extent. They vented their indignation on Andreas Quirinus, by condemning him to a three years' imprisonment in the dungeons. And Sforza, having thus destroyed the force by which his own town of Cremona was threatened, so far complied with the wishes of his generals as to raise the siege of Casale, and to retire thence in the direction of the former town. All this time Michael looked on, but did not dare to attack his apparently invincible kinsman.

As had happened on more important occasions, "rumour, speaking truth from the first," had preceded the authenticated intelligence of this victory at Milan.* The confirmation of the good news by the ambassadors

* See a note on this subject in ALISON'S *History of Europe*, seventh edition, chap. xcv. "It is curious how often the rumour of a great and decisive victory prevails at a great distance in an inconceivably short space of time after its actual occurrence." Livy says that, when the news of the defeat of Asdrubal at the Metaurus was brought to Rome, the rapidity with which it arrived destroyed the credit of the messenger, seeing that it related to events which were said to have taken place at a considerable distance only two days before. In the *London Courier* of 20th June 1815, a rumour was mentioned of Napoleon having been defeated in a great battle near Brussels, on Sunday evening, in which he lost all his heavy artillery. When we recollect that

of Sforza produced a mingled sensation of joy at the destruction of their enemies, and envy of the rising fortune of the great captain. Influenced as before by the latter passion, the chief council immediately assembled together, and abrogated the unlimited powers which, not many weeks before, they had intrusted to him. They ordered him to repair without loss of time to Caravaggio, and to use all his endeavours to reduce it. They naturally thought that, if they could once dislodge the enemy thence, Lodi would be given up to them almost without a struggle; and they made no secret of their intentions of reopening their negotiations with the Venetians as soon as they regained these two important places. Sforza's design had been to attack Brescia, both because the place had been promised to him, and because he well knew that, if his employers were freed from the presence of an enemy in the regions of the Adda, he himself would not be allowed to remain long in the most desirable position of commander of their armies. There might also have been much truth in his own allegations, that, by drawing the enemy into the territory of Brescia, in which he hoped to be able to attack him to advantage, he was taking a surer, and probably a more expeditious, mode of putting the

the French artillery was not taken till sunset on the 18th, the rapidity of this intelligence seems almost incredible. And on the day on which the Greeks conquered the Persians, both at Platæa and at Mycale, it is said that the result of the former battle, which took place early in the morning, was known at Mycale, on the coast of Asia Minor, as the latter was about to commence in the afternoon. But though there is no doubt of the Greek generals having announced a victory, I cannot but think that it was an invention of theirs to encourage their men.

Milanese in the possession of the places that they so much coveted, than by commencing the tedious and doubtful undertaking of a siege; and it is probable that he himself would have had no objection to have seen the Venetians dislodged from these cities after he had attained the objects he had immediately in view. But it was in vain that he represented many of these things to the ambassadors, and, at the same time, upbraided them with the inconsistency and short-sightedness of their employers. Being in the camp, he was not able to bring the power of his eloquence to bear upon the council at Milan, with whose wishes he was obliged to comply. The ambassadors also encouraged both the soldiers and the officers to go to Caravaggio, by promising them a most abundant supply, not only of provisions, but also of everything that would assist them in the prosecution of their enterprise.

Sforza, though constrained to act against his will, displayed great promptitude and talent in carrying out the wishes of the ruling powers at Milan. Five days' march brought him beneath the walls of Caravaggio, which, though they were more than one mile in circumference, he surrounded with his army. He then fortified his camp, so as to render it almost impregnable. Three days after his arrival, he was informed that Michael Attendolo, with the whole army of the Venetians, was about to take up an intrenched position within four miles of him. The circumstance of an enemy being so near him, engaged in a work in which it is impossible to preserve military order,

seemed to Sforza to present an opportunity of attacking which was not to be lost. He immediately brought thither the main body of his army; and though he was met by a fair show of opposition, he would probably have gained most important advantages if he had not been deceived by a report that a large body of the enemy had taken a circuit to the right, with a view of making a flank attack on his camp, while he himself was engaged in front with the majority of his troops. Though he thought it almost incredible that a general of the experience of his kinsman would have weakened his line by extending it in this manner,* he was well aware that the movement, if not checked in time, was fraught with peril to himself. He therefore repaired without delay to the spot whence the alarm had proceeded, intrusting the command of the battle to the two Piccinini. The elder of them evinced no desire to betray the confidence that was reposed in him; but not so the younger. Though Sforza was at this instant acting against his own wishes, in obedience to the orders of the government, and had no object of his own to secure by a victory, the younger Piccinino evidently showed that he was more afraid of conquering than of being conquered. At the time that both armies were wholly engaged, he made a signal to his own troops to retreat, and remained quite unmoved either by the remonstrances of his brother or the regrets of his own officers.

* A movement similar to that which Michael was reported to have made caused the defeat of the Austro-Russian army at Austerlitz, and of the French army at Salamanca.

The victory expected by Sforza might thus have been turned into a defeat, had not he himself ascertained the falsity of the reports that had been brought to him, and made a speedy reappearance on the scene of action. He fortunately arrived in time to arrest the disaster; but the heat of the sun had become so intolerable that it was impossible to renew the attack. The accounts that he received of the state of the enemy showed him how great a victory he had lost. It was ascertained from the prisoners and deserters that their camp had been in complete disorder; that all ranks were panic-stricken, and placed their only hopes of safety in flight; and that they were endeavouring to remove all that they could save to the other side of the Oglio. Though he had no doubt as to who had caused this disappointment, he nevertheless affected to continue on good terms with the traitor, being probably of opinion that he would do him less injury when present in his camp than he might when at a distance in Milan. Michael, in noways daunted by the danger of attempting to fortify a camp within four miles of a formidable adversary, retained his position; and Sforza, having the enemy so near him, deemed it advisable to increase the strength of his fortifications, before proceeding to take the city by storm.

For some time the rival armies remained in the presence of each other, neither daring to hazard a general attack. Both commanders, however, deemed it advisable to render their positions as secure as possible; and in process of time both camps became so strongly fortified that they assumed the appearance of two cities

within a short distance of each other. Those who were within one camp used to bring their batteries and missiles to bear upon any of the enemy who ventured out of the other, and frequent skirmishes took place in the intervening space. In one of these the younger Piccinino received a wound, sufficient to afford him an excuse for absenting himself from the camp; in another, the Venetians suffered so severely that the republic was obliged in no small degree to tax its resources to repair the disasters, having to send to Dalmatia for bowmen, and to Germany for sharpshooters and cavalry. Each general, however, had his own motives for delay. Michael, being well aware both of the envy with which Sforza was regarded by the Piccinini and others, and of the uncertain state of the relation between him and the Milanese, hoped that some dissension might occur in the camp or in the council, which would compel him to desist from his enterprise. On the other hand, Sforza, although a considerable breach had already been effected in the walls, did not attempt to storm the city in the presence of a powerful enemy, fearing that, even should he succeed, his soldiers would be so intent upon pillage as to leave his camp without defence. At one time the expectations of his adversary seemed likely to be realised. The Milanese had already become very remiss in their supply of money and provisions to their general, and there were many who endeavoured to ascribe to him selfish and treacherous motives. It was generally insinuated that he might easily take the city any day that he liked, but that it suited his own designs

better that the enemy should remain in the vicinity of Milan; and that, at all events, he wished for nothing so much as to make the Milanese exhaust their resources, so that they might hereafter fall an easy prey to his ambition. He, however, took little notice of these accusations; and, when remonstrated with for not proceeding faster with his work, he offered to resign the command to any successor they might think fit to appoint. It need hardly be said that they were too wise to take him at his word.

At last, on the thirty-fifth day after the commencement of the siege, a considerable breach had been made in the walls, and the camp was so well fortified that, in the opinion of most, a very few men would suffice to defend it against any attack that could be made on it. In the mean time, a certain Venetian officer, by name Tiberto Brandolino, managed, by the following device, to get into the Milanese camp, and to spy out, as he thought, its most vulnerable points. Having for some time hovered about a wood which lay on its confines, he fell in with a party of foragers, and having suspended two large clusters of grapes to the extremities of a stick which he put on his shoulders, he passed himself off as one of them, and made his way even to Sforza's own tent, and to the walls of the city. From the hasty view that he was able to take of the intrenchments, he came to the opinion that they might be attacked from the side of the wood whence he himself had entered them, as they were on that quarter defended only by a marsh, which he thought might easily be rendered

passable for troops. On his return to the camp he reported accordingly, and strongly recommended them to make a vigorous attack in a quarter whence their enemies did not appear to apprehend any danger. Unfortunately for those to whom he gave the advice, a deep trench had been dug across the greater part of the marsh; but as the sides of it were level, it had escaped his observation.

All this time Sforza was in a great state of uncertainty as to what course he should take. The breach in the walls might be deemed easily practicable according to all the ordinary rules of war; and at one time he meditated a plan of storming the city with one division of his army, and promising the other their full share of the spoil if they would remain steadily at their posts in the intrenchments, to resist any attack of the enemies; but as his recent experience at Casale had taught him how little he could depend upon them when booty was to be had, he dreaded lest the taking of the city should cause the destruction of his army. On the other hand, he well knew that his enemies would persuade the ignorant multitude to ascribe his delay to any motives rather than those of patriotism. Fortune, however, seemed about to declare in his favour; the commandant of Caravaggio wished to save the citizens from the fate of the Piacenzans; and when he saw that the city could no longer be defended against any assault, and that the Venetian army was doing nothing to relieve him, he sent to make offers of surrender.

Information of this having been duly conveyed to

the Venetian camp, a council of war was held, in which each captain was requested to give his opinion in writing, that it might be forwarded to the government at home. The commander-in-chief, Michael Attendolo, suggested that they should leave Caravaggio to its fate, retire to Martinengo, and thence make a rapid descent upon the enemy's army while they were intent upon booty, as he well knew they would be, after the capture of the city. Others were of opinion that the want of confidence between the Milanese and Sforza was so great, and that the dissensions in the camp had reached such an extent, that the army could not be kept together much longer, and that it would most certainly disperse, if they could by any means have the siege prolonged another month. Many thought that by falling back upon and threatening Cremona they might divert Sforza from his enterprise; but the plan that had been suggested by Tiberto Brandolino, who had, as he fancied, spied out the nakedness of the enemy's camp, was most acceptable to the majority, and it was referred, along with the others, to the senate at Venice.

To people at a distance from the scene of operations, nothing seems so easy as to carry out a plan which is represented to them as certain to be successful: their absence does not prevent them from apprehending its advantages, but generally renders them unwilling or unable to understand the countervailing obstacles. The Venetian government viewed the last of the above-mentioned schemes in this light. Its success would be the most complete of any: they could not see any reason

why it should not be carried into practice, and they ordered it to be adopted forthwith. A general who acted contrary to the orders of the Venetian government had not unfrequently to answer with his head for the consequences; and Michael Attendolo, though he did not approve of the plan, was obliged to obey.

While Sforza, together with his secretary Simoneta, was engaged in arranging with the commandant the terms of the capitulation, intelligence was brought to him that the enemy were moving towards Mozanega, which lay on the same side of the camp as the wood and the marsh by which they intended to make their attack. It was at first suggested to him that, as they saw they could not save the city, they were about to shift their quarters; but he immediately repaired in person to see what they were about. As soon as he had arrived at the extremity of the camp, which looked in that direction, he found that the enemy had already emerged from the wood, and that many of the stragglers and detached bodies of his own soldiers were being driven in in some confusion to the camp. These, however, he rallied at the trench, which, as has been noticed already, had escaped the observation of the spy who planned the attack; and having ordered all the officers and soldiers who were in that part of his camp to the defence, he hoped to be able to maintain it till the arrival of reinforcements should give him the superiority.

A severe, and even bloody combat, for these times, took place in the trench. The assailants well knew that a repulse would be tantamount to a defeat; while the

defenders were aware that, if the trench were taken before their fellow-soldiers could be marshalled in fighting array, everything they possessed would fall into the hands of the enemy. Jokes and repartees are said to have passed between the officers on both sides—the one anticipating an easy victory, and the others telling them that they would soon return in a very different plight from that in which they advanced.* At last, Alexander Sforza arrived with a body of four thousand cavalry and infantry; and after having driven back the enemy from that part of the trench that was immediately opposed to him, he passed over it, and attacked the others on their flank and rear. This movement obliged them to fall back, and their confusion was in no small degree aggravated by the wood in their rear. Sforza observing their state, cried out at once, "The day is ours!" and ordered the whole body of his troops to cross the trench and follow up their advantage. The retreat of the Venetians soon degenerated into a route. A great part of their army, including several officers who had dismounted under the hopes of being able to escape through the wood and the marsh, were taken before they could reach their own camp. In the midst of the pursuit, Sforza's sonorous voice was heard ordering them to give quarter whenever it was possible. The consequent necessity of leaving a large body behind, to guard the great number of prisoners that had fallen into his hands, had considerably diminished his forces before he arrived at the enemy's encampment. When

* SIMONETA, lib. xiii. CORIO, part v.

there, he met Francesco Piccinino and his men, who had hitherto taken no part in the action. The former began making some excuses for the absence of his troops, when the victorious general (without the least appearance of anger) assured him that there was no need for apology; that everything, up to the present moment, had gone as well as possible, and that he had come just in the nick of time to assist him in passing the intrenchment. This, however, he declined doing, saying that enough had already been accomplished for one day. Sforza, however, whose mode of fighting was now very different from what it had been after the battle of Tenna,* replied that a victory was a mere barren honour if it was not turned to account; and then began the attack, allowing the latter to retire unheeded. But after they had proceeded some little distance, he made them believe that his men were already within the trenches enriching themselves with spoil. This bait was too strong for Piccinino and his soldiers: they returned to follow in the wake of the victor; and the enemy, believing themselves overwhelmed by numbers, ceased to resist.

Nothing could have been more complete than the victory. The Milanese, in the words of their historian Corio, took the camp, with all the possessions of the enemy, and made a great number of prisoners. Michael Attendolo and Louis Gonzaga continued to fight to the last; but they, too, were obliged to seek safety in flight. Others preferred letting themselves, along with the

* See the observations on that subject, *ante*, vol. i. p. 306.

standards committed to their care, fall into the hands of the enemy, to encountering the displeasure of the Venetians after such a disaster. The victors, of course, remained pillaging till the evening. Among other things, they took six pieces of heavy and thirty pieces of light artillery, several cars, and a great quantity of grain, gold, silver, and costly armour of all sorts. Every soldier, from the highest to the lowest, obtained an unprecedented share of spoil, enough, it was said, to make his fortune. The number of prisoners was three thousand foot and ten thousand five hundred cavalry.* Many of the horses died in consequence of the fatigue they had undergone in such a protracted action, under a burning autumn sun. Most of the men, after having been stripped of everything they possessed, were set at liberty. Though the majority of the officers were retained as prisoners of war, Sforza, in return for favours that he had formerly received, granted some few of them their liberty. Among them was a certain Venetian commissary, who had at various times tried to do Sforza what injury he could by spreading false reports, and dwelling on his illegitimacy. In his present situation, the memory of his former misdeeds caused him to tremble, and, when brought into the presence of the victor, like other low-minded men, who are full of insolence in prosperity, but ready to lick the dust in adver-

* I have here followed the numbers given by Muratori in his *Annals of Italy*. Corio and Simoneta estimate the number of cavalry at twelve thousand five hundred. The account of Machiavelli, who says that out of twelve thousand cavalry little more than one thousand escaped, nearly agrees with that given in the text.

sity, he threw himself on his knees, and implored his captor's forgiveness. Sforza was never wantonly cruel, and, in the present state of his fortunes, he could well afford to despise the man who was then at his feet. So he told him to be of good cheer, and contented himself with mildly expostulating with him on account of his conduct, and cautioning him to be more circumspect for the future.

The day after the battle the triumph of the victors was completed by the surrender of Caravaggio.

CHAPTER III.

EFFECTS PRODUCED BY THE VICTORY AT MILAN.—COUNCIL OF WAR IN THE MILANESE CAMP.—SFORZA MARCHES AGAINST BRESCIA.—DOUBLE-DEALINGS OF THE MILANESE.—SFORZA REMONSTRATES IN VAIN—PASSES OVER TO THE VENETIANS.—EXPLANATIONS AND RECRIMINATIONS.

As the victory of Caravaggio was perhaps the most complete that had been gained in Italy for a whole century, the news of it caused no small sensation at Milan. It came the more acceptable, as a contrary report had been spread by Charles Gonzaga, who, after having been wounded in the suddenness of the first encounter, had retired thither. A great display was made on the entrance of the most notable captains into the city, and a species of triumphal procession, somewhat resembling those of ancient Rome, was got up. The people could not fail to admire the abilities of a general who had gained a great victory, when placed in circumstances in which others could scarcely have avoided a defeat. All were loud in his praises, except the Piccinini, who secretly insinuated that, if they had not come up at a most critical moment, the battle could not have been won. But Sforza treated all the calumnies of his maligners with contemptuous indifference; and as everybody knew that they had not made their

appearance on the field of battle till the fate of the day was decided, he might well afford to do so.

It was not long, however, before all feelings of exultation were, as after the capture of Piacenza and the victory at Casale, followed by envy and fear at the rising greatness of the general. As he was no longer intrusted with supreme power in the conduct of the war, the government sent ambassadors to him, who, after a due consultation with the officers, were to give him directions about his subsequent operations. On the third day after the capture of the city, a council of war was held in the camp. The ruling powers, as well as the majority of the people at Milan, were desirous to see Lodi and Bergamo freed from their enemies. They naturally thought that this could be easily accomplished in the absence of any opposing force; and among them the only point in debate was, which of these two places they ought first to attack. It is probable, indeed, that many of them, who had begun to despair of seeing the dominions of the new republic extend over the cities and territories that had been subject to the two last of the Visconti, would have been content by the acquisition of these two places, which would have enabled them to establish a free state of about the same extent as that which had been at the head of the Lombard league in the days of Frederic I.; and that, having done this, they might not be sorry to dispense with the services of such a dangerous man as Sforza. But he, on the other hand, was more anxious to take Brescia, which had been promised to him, than

to put his employers in such a state of independence; and he was able to show many reasons why his plan was more likely to be effective in carrying out even the immediate wishes of the Milanese, than those which were suggested by their ambassadors. So, while others were divided in their opinion as to whether they ought to march first to Lodi or to Bergamo, or make a simultaneous attack on both places, he tried to bring them over to his wishes by the following arguments:—That, since they had gained a great victory, they ought to proceed in such a manner as to escape the imputation that had been frequently thrown out against them, of not knowing how to use their advantage; that they could not do so more effectually than by carrying the war to the other side of the Oglio; that by this step they would increase not only the moral impression that had already been produced, but even the actual advantages that were to be reaped from their victory; that their forces would derive their supplies from an enemy's territory; that the remains of the opposite army would not have the courage to rally if they were vigorously pursued in that direction; that the garrisons in most of the strongholds would be so taken by surprise that they would surrender at once; that they might then bring their whole forces to bear against the town of Brescia; that, if the people of Bergamo and Lodi beheld themselves cut off from all hopes of assistance, in consequence of the fall of that place, they would of their own accord surrender; but that if, instead of following his advice, they fell back upon Bergamo or Lodi, and

wasted their time in the siege of these cities, the Venetians, possessed as they were of almost boundless resources, both in money and other things, would soon bring against them another army, strong as that which they had beaten, and that thus they would scarcely be in a better condition than they had been before.

The persuasive powers of Sforza were always omnipotent in the camp. The officers and soldiers, whom he had so often led to victory and plunder, were all in his favour. He was backed in his opinion by two or three independent condottieri, and only opposed by Piccinino, who was piqued at the idea of seeing him in possession of another city. But the opposition of the latter was overruled by the rest of the assembly, and it was finally determined that Sforza should proceed with the main body of his army to Brescia, and that Ventimiglia, a nobleman of some importance in the kingdom of Naples, who had lately adopted the profession of arms, and was now in the service of the Milanese, should betake himself with a small force to Lodi. The judgment of the council was further confirmed by the arrival of several messengers from the different towns in the territory he was about to invade, all of whom said that they were ready to surrender to him, and that they wondered much that he was not among them already. The delay, of course, had been involuntary on his part; and when he had obtained leave to follow out his own plans, he was not slow in making up for lost time. One day's march brought him from Caravaggio, within the confines of the Brescian territory. In four days more, he

took, almost without opposition, all the strongholds therein; and then he encamped within two miles of the town of Brescia, with the intention of immediately commencing its siege.

Piccinino, finding that in the camp he could not prevail against the great rival of his family, obtained leave to go to Milan, under pretence of attending to some necessary business. There he endeavoured to stir up the republican party, by representing to them how much they would have to fear from Sforza, if they allowed him to add Brescia to his other possessions. Many concurred with him in this opinion; but they feared the people, who worshipped Sforza with all the homage that is generally rendered to a conqueror; and, warned by the experience of the past, they did not dare openly to take measures against him; but they tried to injure him in every under-hand manner that their malice could suggest. They sent messengers to the Venetians, to inform them that they would find a large party at Milan willing to listen to propositions of peace; and they obtained leave for Piccinino to withdraw his forces from the army of Sforza, to prosecute the war in the territory of Lodi.

Sforza soon became aware of these proceedings. Arasmus, the person who was formerly mentioned as having been seized by the mob for making propositions of peace, sent a letter to an officer in Sforza's army, exhorting him to arrange with the other captains, to divide the forces in such a manner that their general should not be able to bring together troops sufficient for the

capture of Brescia. This letter having been dropped by accident, and brought to Sforza, served to remove from his mind all doubts, if any had formerly existed, as to what the Piccinini had been doing at Milan. He, nevertheless, persevered, hoping that he might take the city before his enemies could effect all the mischief they were plotting. He had already invested it on the two sides on which it was bounded by a plain, and had placed guards near the opposite gates, and at different stations in the mountains, to prevent any supplies being sent to it. The garrison, which consisted of one thousand horse and five hundred foot, taken from the army that had been defeated at Caravaggio, scarcely dared to attack him except under the cover of night; and as their spirits were considerably broken after their recent reverse, it did not seem probable that they would make a protracted resistance against one who was deemed invincible. Everything, indeed, appeared to promise him a speedy success, when his hopes were much damped by the discovery of a treachery which was almost unparalleled in the history of nations. While he was endeavouring, by all the means in his power, to take a city which was the most important that had fallen into the hands of the enemy, and which had been the first cause of the hostilities with which Lombardy had been desolated for nearly a quarter of a century, and while he was not without hopes that the inhabitants would of their own accord surrender, he ascertained, beyond all possibility of doubt, that the state whose army he was commanding was encouraging the besieged to hold out, by

informing them that they had already proposed terms to the Venetians, which they hoped would lead to a speedy cessation of hostilities; that, even if these failed, they would order Sforza to go elsewhere with his army; and that, under any circumstances, he would soon be obliged to retire to his winter cantonments. A short time afterwards, he himself received orders not to waste any more time at Brescia, but to make himself master of the cities on the Mincio, and to proceed thence to Verona. The bearer of these mandates added that, if they were not obeyed at once, supplies should be withheld.

On the receipt of these orders, Sforza at first made a temperate reply. He reminded their bearer of the arrangements that had been made after the battle of Caravaggio, from which he distinctly understood that he was to retain, if not the whole of the forces he had at that time, at least those that were now with him for his present enterprise; that its difficulties were not such as they had represented; that, from the arrangements he had made, it was easy to see that, if the city did not ere long surrender, it might be taken by storm; that, with regard to the plan which they proposed, it would be contrary to all rules of military science to advance while their enemies held such a city as Brescia in their rear; that the force which was there would, after he had gone, at once regain possession of all the strongholds and towns in the neighbourhood which had already surrendered to him; that all their communications would in this manner be intercepted; that as to the cities on the Mincio,

they could not be taken so easily as they seemed to think; that many of them belonged to the marquis of Mantua; and that, if he did not assist them and furnish them with supplies, their position would be untenable.

Though these arguments were just, Sforza well knew that they would avail nothing with men whose leading motive was jealousy of him. He saw too well that the time had come when he could no longer act under the Milanese, with either honour or advantage to himself. Their behaviour to him throughout the whole of the war, and more especially upon the present occasion, afforded him sufficiently specious excuses to justify, both to himself and to others, any step that he might deem it advisable to take. He therefore made up his mind, as soon as he beheld a favourable occasion, to break from his present employers, and publicly to assert his pretensions to be Duke of Milan; and it was not long before the much-wished-for opportunity presented itself.

The government of Venice, however they might have been vexed, were by no means driven to despair by the result of the battle at Caravaggio. Though unable to bring together another army against their enemy, they made every preparation for retarding his progress. They put garrisons into all the cities and strongholds; and having learned from the previous wars how important it was to have the command of the lake of Garda, they equipped four galleys at Peschiera. And, as some suspected Michael Attendolo of collusion with his kinsman, and all agreed that he was incapable of opposing him, they appointed one Marcellus to the

command of what forces they were able to collect. But they placed their chief reliance both in the assistance and the friendly mediation of the Florentines. They well knew the friendship of Cosmo de' Medici and Sforza; and the frequent overtures of the Milanese, as well as the private information which they continued to receive, had made them fully aware of the want of confidence between the latter and his employers. In accordance with their expectations, as Alphonso had at that time just raised the siege of Piombino, their republican allies sent a force of two thousand horse and one thousand foot to their assistance. At the same time, both republics made overtures of reconciliation and alliance to Sforza, by means of Angelo Simoneta, the uncle of the historian of that name. These overtures were seconded by Bianca Maria, who was also incessantly urging her husband to claim from the Milanese the succession that she believed to belong to her. In this state of his feelings and his circumstances, he did not hesitate to accept the terms now offered to him. By these terms, it was agreed upon that the Venetians were to assist him to make himself master of Milan, and allow him thirteen thousand florins per month for the support of his troops till he should succeed in so doing; but that he was to be content with the possession of those cities and territories that had belonged to Philip at the time of his death, and was to restore to them all those places of which he had since deprived them.

During the progress of these negotiations, but few of Sforza's officers had any notion of his real intentions.

But when everything had been arranged, he called them together, for the purpose of declaring and justifying to them the part that he was now about to take. He begged them to call to mind the desperate position of the Milanese at the time of Philip's death; that they were deprived of almost everything they had formerly possessed; their so-called allies were all in revolt; their capital was surrounded by enemies' armies, and that, if he had not come to their succour, they must have been completely subjugated; that his first step was to secure them, by negotiation, the friendship of the Parmese; that he then took for them the citadel of San Columbano; that he then took Piacenza, with no inconsiderable sacrifice of his soldiers, and, as was evident from the fate of his horse having been killed under him, at no small danger to himself;* that immediately after that the Milanese began intriguing against him; that he, nevertheless, brought his army into the neighbourhood of the Adda, and prevented the country from being pillaged by the Venetians; that by remaining there, as directed, he exposed his own possessions at Cremona to no inconsiderable danger; that he afterwards completely destroyed their fleet at Casale; that when, in obedience to their commands, he laid siege to Caravaggio, his power was so weakened by their intrigues that he might on many occasions have fallen an easy prey to the enemy; that he, nevertheless, continued to

* At any other time it would excite surprise to hear a general claiming any merit for having exposed himself in the manner alluded to; but it must be recollected that this speech was made when such battles as that of Anghiari were of no uncommon occurrence.

maintain the army principally at his own expense; that he ended by putting them in possession of the city, and enriching their soldiers with a quantity of booty almost unequalled in Italian warfare; that, in spite of all he had done for them, they grudged him his promised reward of the city of Brescia; that when he repaired thither, their first act was to weaken his army by ordering the Piccinini to bring their forces against Lodi; that when, notwithstanding this, they saw every propability of his taking the city, they endeavoured to prevent his attaining one of the stipulated rewards, by trying to make peace with the Venetians, and encouraging the citizens to hold out against him to the last. Thus a prudent regard for his own safety, for the possessions of his wife, and for the fortunes of his children, rendered the step he had taken quite unavoidable. He concluded by exhorting them all to remain with him, if they wished for rewards worthy of the labour they had undergone, and of the success they had attained.

The above arguments were so plausible in themselves, and had been so ably stated by the speaker, that none had aught to say against them in the council. Many, indeed, as their subsequent conduct proved, must have suspected his motives, and were inimical to him at heart; but he was personally popular with the great body of the army, most of whom, it is probable, were allured by the recollection of former, and the prospect of future plunder, and troubled themselves but little about the righteousness of his cause.

The news of Sforza's desertion caused a consterna-

tion at Milan, equal in intensity to the joy which had been produced by his success at Caravaggio. The great men, it was said, were grieved; the people indulged in reproaches; the women and children poured forth lamentations. The government themselves, indignant at being overreached in dishonesty, sent ambassadors to remonstrate with him. Some of them admitted, indeed, that he had cause for complaint, but entreated him not to set down the misdeeds of a few citizens as the acts of the republic; while others, though it must have been as unbecoming in them to make any taunts on this score, as it would have been in Clodius to censure the libertines, or in Catiline to accuse the Cethegi, without reserve reproached him with the grossest treachery and deceit. The speech made by the latter is curious, both as making a pretence of injured innocence on their part, and as setting forth his conduct in exactly a contrary light to that which he had endeavoured to represent it to his army. The following are the words of it as given by Machiavelli :*—

"Whenever a person wishes to obtain anything from another, he generally tries him with entreaties, with promises of rewards, or with threats, in order that he may be moved by pity, by hopes of advantage, or by fear, to do that which he desires. But in dealing with men who are cruel and avaricious, and who think themselves powerful, it is but lost labour to attempt to soften them with prayers, to bring them over by hopes of advantage, or to frighten them with threats. We, however,

* *Ist.*, lib. vi.

having (too lately it may be) acquired experience of your cruelty, your ambition, and your pride, are come, not indeed to ask any favour from you, but to remind you of the benefits you have received from the people of Milan, and to show you with what ingratitude you are treating them, that in the midst of our misfortunes we may have the melancholy pleasure of loading you with reproaches. You, indeed, may well recollect in what a state you were at the time of Philip's death; you were involved in hostilities with the king of Naples, and the pope; you had forsaken the Florentines and the Venetians; and as they were justly indignant at your conduct, and had no longer any need of you, you had almost become their enemy. You were exhausted by the war which you had waged with the church, you had but few soldiers, you were without allies or money, and could not have any hope of being able to retain either your states or your former reputation. These circumstances alone would have caused you to fall, but for our simplicity—for we alone gave you protection, being moved thereto by respect to the memory of the late duke; and we believed that you would show some friendship to his successors, and being willing to confer on you some favours in addition to those that you had received from him, we promised you Verona or Brescia besides your other fiefs: your attachment to us ought, therefore, to be firm and indissoluble. What more could we give you, or promise you? What more could you have, or even wish for? Thus you have received from us unlooked-for kindness, and we have received from

you unlooked-for injury. Indeed, even before this you showed the iniquity of your intentions; for as soon as you were made commander-in-chief of our armies, you acted contrary to all justice in accepting the sovereignty of Pavia—a deed which should have forewarned us of the result we might have expected from your friendship. Alas!—for those who desire all, a part is not sufficient. You promised us, indeed, that we should have the benefit of every acquisition that you might make, as you well knew that anything you gave us you could in an instant take from us. This you did after the victory of Caravaggio, which, though obtained by our blood and money, has been the cause of our ruin. Unhappy indeed are the states which have to defend their liberty against those that wish to oppress them; but much more unhappy are those which have to defend themselves with faithless and mercenary arms like yours. May posterity take warning from our case more than we have done from that of Thebes and Philip of Macedon, who, after he had obtained a victory over their enemies, changed from being their captain to be their enemy, and finally became their ruler. We, however, cannot be accused of any fault, except that of having placed much confidence in one in whom we ought to have placed but little; for the whole of your past life, and your boundless spirit, not content with any degree of dignity, or any possession, ought to have put us on our guard, and we ought not to have placed any reliance in one who had betrayed the signor of Lucca, deceived the Florentines and Venetians, thought

little of our duke, showed no respect to the king of Naples, and, worst of all, inflicted many injuries on God and the church. And we ought never to have thought that Francesco Sforza would have shown more respect to the people of Milan than he did to so many sovereigns; and that, after having so often violated his engagements with others, he would keep them with us. But this, though it may show our imprudence, cannot either palliate your treachery or clear you from the infamous character which our just complaints will be the means of procuring you throughout the world; nor will it save you from the sting of your own conscience when those arms, which we prepared to attack and to frighten others, are brought to wound and to injure ourselves; for you yourself will think that you deserve the punishment of parricides. And even if you are entirely blinded by ambition, yet the whole world, who are the witnesses of your iniquity, will make you open your eyes. God too will make you open them, if perjury, breach of promise, and betrayal are displeasing to Him, and if, judging from the way in which He has hitherto always ruled by His unseen goodness, He does not wish for ever to be the friend of the wicked. Do not now flatter yourself with the hopes of a certain victory, for, in the first place, you will be prevented by the just displeasure of the Almighty; and, in the next place, we all prefer death to the loss of liberty. Even if we cannot defend our liberty, we should surrender to any one rather than to you; and if, for our sins, we should ever come into your power, be well assured that your reign, which will

have been begun with fraud and infamy, will end either in your person, or in that of your sons, with blame and loss."

When men have made up their minds how to act, they are seldom induced to change their course by reproaches or taunts; and it will easily be credited that Sforza was unmoved by aught that the ambassadors could say. Whatever might have been his feelings, he did not either in word or in gesture betray the slightest symptom of irritation, and very quietly replied, that he was happy to be able to give them the satisfaction of venting their anger in words so destitute of sense; that he would answer the charges that were brought against him, if they were in the presence of any one who could be an impartial judge of their differences; that he himself was quite conscious that he had in no way injured the Milanese, but merely taken precautions against being injured by them; that they had no reason to feel aggrieved at his having taken a step that they themselves had already endeavoured to take; and that if he had not acted as he had done, he would, ere long, have had reason to upbraid them with reproaches of the same nature as those that they were now casting against him. He concluded by appealing to the same God upon whom they had called to avenge them of their adversaries, and expressed a wish that He would so order events that the result of the war might show which of the two parties had most justice on his side, and was acting most in consonance with His will. Shortly after this the ambassadors returned to Milan,

and Sforza set about the measures that were most advisable in his new situation.

Such were the chief circumstances of a transaction which has been represented by the enemies of Sforza as a most unparalleled piece of treachery on his part. He himself endeavoured to make out, as has been shown, that, considering the behaviour of others, he could not have acted in a different manner; and it must be allowed that he was not more deserving of blame either than those whom he betrayed, or those into whose service he entered. The former were frequently intriguing against him during the time that he was in the command of their army, and they could not have been surprised at his having done unto them as they had sought to do unto him; the latter were entertaining Sforza's enemies with the semblance of listening to their negotiations, at the time that they were endeavouring to deprive them of their general. But although the practice of the times, and the behaviour of other parties, will in a great measure palliate this act, it is impossible not to concur in the opinion of M. Sismondi, "that Sforza's conduct throughout was so skilful, and directed so uniformly towards the same end, that it is difficult to believe that he had not foreseen and premeditated everything, from the time that he engaged in the service of the Milanese."

CHAPTER IV.

SFORZA DESERTED BY SOME OF HIS OFFICERS — IS PUT IN POSSESSION OF PIACENZA—JOINED BY SOME FRIENDS FROM MILAN—TAKES CASTLES IN THE IMMEDIATE NEIGHBOURHOOD OF MILAN.—MILANESE SEND TO REMONSTRATE WITH HIM. — HE PROTECTS THEIR AMBASSADORS FROM HIS SOLDIERS. — SENDS A FRIEND WITH THEM TO MILAN. — VIOLENT SPEECH OF GIORGIO LAMPUGNANO. — CHARLES GONZAGA THE HEAD OF THE REPUBLIC.— ABBIATE SAVED FROM PILLAGE BY BIANCA MARIA.—SFORZA CUTS OFF THE WATER FROM MILAN. — PICCININO CARRIES OFF CATTLE FROM PAVIA.— A FLORENTINE AMBASSADOR REMAINS IN SFORZA'S CAMP.—AFFAIRS OF PARMA.—SFORZA IS JOINED BY PICCININO.—SEVERAL MILANESE NOBLES BANISHED OR EXECUTED.—MOBOCRACY AT MILAN. — AFFAIRS OF PARMA. —PARMESE OFFER THEIR CITY TO LIONEL OF ESTE. — VENETIANS ARRANGE THAT IT SHOULD BE GIVEN TO SFORZA.

THE extremities to which the Milanese had been reduced before they retained Sforza showed that, unassisted, they were no match for the Venetians. The man by whose aid alone they had maintained themselves was now about to pass over to the enemy. If, before hiring him, they had trembled for their fate, it might now be thought that nothing could save them. There was, however, one important difference between their present and their past circumstances. On a former occasion, if the Venetians had taken their city, they would have added it to their own empire; now, they had promised it to their new ally. Judging of the policy of their republican neighbours by their own, they thought that they would not be particularly anxious to continue the war for the sake

of their condottiere, after they had got all they wanted for themselves. They therefore determined to use all the arts of diplomacy and intrigue, to maintain themselves for the present. The result will show how well they played their game; for though they did not ultimately succeed, it required all the talents, the perseverance, and the generalship of Sforza to beat them.

It was not long before an event happened that made many people think that Sforza's success was not likely to be so rapid as had at first been anticipated. Piccinino succeeded in regaining possession of Lodi; Charles Gonzaga, with a force of about one thousand two hundred horse, and five hundred foot, deserted him by night; and many feared lest the other captains and soldiers who had been engaged by the Milanese should follow their example. These events made such an impression in the camp, that it required all his address to prevent his soldiers from losing that self-confidence which is one of the principal requisites for military success. He himself, nothing daunted, shortly began to take the measures which his altered circumstances required. He lost no time in restoring to the Venetians, both their captives that still remained in his hands, and the cities that he had taken in the territory of Brescia. As the former bridge across the Adda had been broken down, he constructed a new one, and passed over it into the territory of Lodi, giving out that he appeared there as an ally, not as an enemy. He had spies to report to him the actions and sayings of the Milanese generals that still remained in his camp; a fleet was equipped at

Pavia, which served both to guard the passage of the Po and to supply his army with abundance of provisions. The legate of the Milanese, who at first said that he could not leave his army until he received orders from home, was politely dismissed, and requested to assure the Milanese, that, if they would at once receive him as their duke, they had nothing to fear; but that, if they persevered in their foolish attempt to govern themselves, he could not answer for the consequences. He also sent to the Parmese, exhorting them to quit the Milanese, and to put themselves under his protection; and at the same time admonished them, if they did not wish to do this, to abstain from rendering any assistance to his enemies. After this, he endeavoured to sound the dispositions of the inhabitants of Piacenza. For money, he applied as usual to Cosmo de' Medici, to Lionel of Este, as also to Jacobo Fregoso, the leading man at Genoa, who had in the preceding year married his natural daughter; finally, he requested the legates of the Venetians to return home, and endeavour to procure him an augmentation of forces according to their previous arrangements.

In the mean time Jacobo Piccinino moved towards Piacenza, where he hoped to reconcile the contending factions to the rule of the Milanese, and to place his army in cantonments for the winter. The inhabitants, however, whether it was that they disliked the yoke of their present rulers, or that they foresaw the success and dreaded the displeasure of Sforza, refused to admit him. On hearing of this, the latter, heedless of the

admonitions of his friends, who feared lest some should try to avenge themselves on him for the losses they had sustained in the preceding year, went thither himself to receive their allegiance. On his arrival, he found that the citizens, so far from making any attempt against him, welcomed him with acclamations, and submitted to him at once. With their permission, he placed a garrison of six hundred horse in the citadel, under the command of Salernitano and Thomas Theobaldus, from Bologna. He then took up a position between Pavia and Milan; so that, while the rear of his army was guarded by the former of these cities, he appeared to threaten the latter.

While he was in this position, the three brothers of the family of San Severino, notable captains of their time, came to him from Milan, bringing with them a force of about eight hundred horse, and acknowledged him as their duke. Soon afterwards he engaged the services of William, brother of the marquis of Montferrat, and of Vermio, a condottiere of some note—the former of whom joined him under the hopes of some future day getting the city of Alessandria, and the latter for the sake of preserving the towns that he held in the vicinity of Piacenza. Vermio also obtained a promise from him that his eldest son by his first wife should, in the course of time, be married to his only daughter. Even at that time it was deemed advisable to seek the alliance of one who bade fair to be one of the most powerful sovereigns in Italy.

The approach of winter did not cause Sforza to cease

from active operations. But in order to protect his soldiers from the rains that usually set in about that season of the year, he generally managed to find shelter for them in the cottages and farm-houses, with which that highly-cultivated region abounded. Indeed, though his ambition was at all times great, it seems at this time to have been particularly whetted by the great beauty and fertility of the territory for which he was then contending, for he is reported then to have said, that though he had been in every part of Italy from the Straits of Messina to the Alps, both in war and in peace, he had seen no part of it to be compared to that which lay between Pavia, Lodi, and Milan. Thus the gift of beauty made Italy suffer, as well by stirring up the passions of her own sons as by exciting the cupidity of barbarians.

Having posted his troops in the manner described, he managed to occupy so considerable a portion of the territory of Milan as to prevent the unfortunate inhabitants of the city from deriving their customary supplies from the country. The three neighbouring towns of Rosato, Sachiarella, and Binasco, soon came into his hands. Some little show of resistance was made to him before the citadel of the last-named place surrendered; but here, like Napoleon at Ulm, he overbore all opposition, as well by the terror of his name as by the adroitness with which he was able to turn it to account. The citadel itself was on a lofty eminence with its walls in excellent order, and surrounded by a trench which was filled with water; it had been well

garrisoned and well provisioned by the Milanese, and seemed capable of offering a protracted resistance. The light troops of Sforza, being the first to approach it, were considerably annoyed by the discharge of missiles therefrom. But when the commandant saw the great forces of his enemy in the surrounding country, he lost all heart, and ordered his men to desist from offering them any active resistance. Sforza, taking advantage of this respite, approached the edge of the trench, and shouted out, "O commandant! if this citadel is not this instant delivered up to me, I will forthwith substitute cannon for these light arms; and, secure as you now think yourself, you will soon find it battered about your ears. And you shall soon be as much below as you are now above us; and those that are with you shall be sent headlong into the trench beneath." The terrified commandant entreated that he might be allowed to save his reputation, by postponing his answer till the following day, before which time he might receive directions from Milan. But Sforza knew well how to take advantage both of his present position and of the consternation of his adversary, and he immediately replied, "What do I care about time, or the wishes of the Milanese? If you do not at this moment surrender, nothing short of an extraordinary interposition of the Almighty shall save you from my hands." * These words produced the desired effect, and he was forthwith put in possession of the citadel.

For some time the Milanese had continued to hope

* SIMONETA, lib. xv.

that, whatever might have been the intentions of Sforza, he would not have had the power to proceed to extremities against them. They well knew that he had not the means to carry on a war at his own expense; they did not think that the Venetians would supply him with money or troops to follow up any enterprise of his own; and they expected that the majority of the soldiers with which they had furnished him would desert him, as soon as he entered their territory. But his present position, master as he was of almost everything except their city, and threatening every day to cut off their supplies, showed them that their danger was greater than had been anticipated. They therefore sent again to remonstrate with him, in rather humbler terms than before: they affected to take it much to heart that the person whom they had looked up to as their protector should have become their persecutor, and they declared that they would do anything for him except surrender their liberty. In conclusion, they entreated him at least not to continue to employ against them their own troops. In answer to these representations, he said that the city of Milan belonged to him by right of inheritance, and that he was merely seeking his own; that he was not the enemy of the great body of the people, but merely of a domineering faction that sought to deprive him of his rights; that, as a proof of this, he appealed to the manner in which he had respected the property as well as the persons of the people, whenever they had come into his power; that, as for the Milanese troops in his army, they had his permission now, as heretofore,

to act just as they liked. On the departure of the ambassadors, he had some little trouble to preserve discipline among his troops, a considerable number of whom set upon them at no very great distance from his camp, and stripped them of all they possessed. Fortunately for his reputation, he received intelligence of this act of violence in sufficient time to have all their property restored to the injured parties, and to have several of the malefactors hanged in their presence. He was about to proceed in the same manner with all who had been concerned in the robbery, when the ambassadors entreated that their lives should be spared.

Sforza well knew that his party at Milan would be considerably strengthened, both by the commanding position which he held at that instant, and by the manner in which he had abstained from wantonly injuring the people. He also judged that a favourable impression would be caused by the kind treatment and protection which their ambassadors had received at his hands. For this reason he sent with them to the city a friend of his own, who found a considerable number, both of the nobles and the common people, well disposed to receive him, and he was not without hopes that they might all be prevailed upon to do so. He was allowed to plead the cause of his master in the hall of the dukes, before the assembly of the people. But whatever expectations he had previously entertained were frustrated by the influence of one Georgio Lampugnano, who had accompanied the ambassadors to Sforza's camp, and shown himself throughout to be one of his bitterest enemies.

He made a most violent speech to the people, in which he called both Sforza himself and Bianca Maria by the most opprobrious names, and asked them if they thought that such people were fit to be rulers of their ancient city. He concluded by saying that their would-be duke had many sons, brothers, and connections, each of whom they would find an intolerable tyrant; that under them neither the persons nor the properties of their citizens, nor the honour of their matrons or maids, would be safe; that they would have to rebuild at no small cost of money and labour the citadel, which they had so lately levelled with the ground; and that they might ere long behold their wives and children working as slaves in re-erecting this instrument of oppression.

The passions of the ignorant, and, it may be, the fears of many sober-minded people, were stirred up by this harangue. Many false stories were circulated against Sforza, and many of his most questionable acts, and of the deeds of severity which, at different times, he had thought himself necessitated to commit, were exaggerated so as to blast his reputation. And there were many people who had seen with their own eyes, or who had heard from their fathers of, the cruelties that had been perpetrated by their rulers of old, and to whom the dangers that were set forth in such strong language by Lampugnano must have appeared in no way overdrawn. The result of the whole was, that Sforza's name, for a time, became a sort of byword of unpopularity, and all classes declared their determination to oppose him to the very last drop of their blood. In

their present critical position, they intrusted the chief conduct of their proceedings to Charles Gonzaga; they ordered Francesco Piccinino to return with all his force to the city; and they placed garrisons, under the most trustworthy of their captains, in Como, Monza, Novara, and several other towns which still remained faithful to them. They also sent to the king of France, and to the dukes of Burgundy and Savoy, to beg for aid; and they left no means untried to render the name of Sforza as unpopular, both in Italy and out of it, as they had already made it within the walls of their city.

Sforza, seeing that matters had come to this extremity, resolved to give the Milanese and their allies some experience of the evils of war. His first step was to lay siege to the town of Abbiate; and having, in three days, effected a considerable breach in the walls, he summoned the inhabitants to surrender. On their refusal to do so, he swore that, as soon as it fell into his hands, he would abandon it, without any mercy, to be pillaged by his soldiers. There is very little doubt but that it would have shared the fate of Piacenza, if it had not been saved by the intercession of Bianca Maria. It so happened that, previous to her marriage, she had passed the greater part of her time there along with her mother—she had many friends among its inhabitants, and was much attached to the people in general. Fortunately for them, intelligence of their impending fate was soon brought to her at Pavia, and she used all her influence with her husband to save them. As he seldom refused anything to a wife to

whom he was so much indebted, he consented, for her sake, to pardon them. Having promised this, he sent a second summons to them to surrender. But the inhabitants, either through ignorance of the manner in which a city could be taken by storm, or at the instigation of the garrison, who were anxious to gain time for the Milanese, again sent a refusal. The news of this spread like fire among the camp; the soldiers desired nothing so much as that their general should be irritated by the obstinacy of the citizens, and abandon them to their fate. A great body of them having rushed forward to the breach, crying out, "Booty! booty!" and begun to effect an entrance into the city, it required the utmost exertions of Sforza and one of his officers to restrain them. When order had been in some measure restored, the former, thinking that the inhabitants must now have become convinced of the futility of all further resistance, approached the breach to arrange about the terms of the capitulation. But here again they seemed determined to tempt fate; for one of their number, probably thinking that he would do a good deed if he put Sforza out of the world, hurled a javelin at him, which, however, an attendant managed to ward off by the handle of his spear. Sforza merely remarked that his time had not yet come, and moved on, neither daunted nor irritated. On his arriving at the place where he had expected the leading citizens to treat with him, and finding nobody, he said that he took their behaviour on this occasion much more to heart than the attack that had been made on

him; for that it really seemed as if they were trying to make a fool of him, and to bring destruction upon themselves: nevertheless, for his wife's sake he would spare them if he could; but that he very much feared that he could not restrain his soldiers any longer. The dread of this last event brought the citizens to their senses, and they surrendered before daybreak on the following morning. The commander of the garrison, well knowing that the fortress could not stand the enemy's cannon, soon after followed their example.

The possession of this city enabled Sforza to turn the water from the canal which led from the Ticino to the city of Milan. By this act he prevented the inhabitants deriving their usual supplies from the adjacent country. He was, however, disappointed in his expectations of starving them into an immediate surrender. His enemies had managed to inspire all classes with so great a dread of his rule, that they determined to submit to any privation rather than receive him as their ruler. Their present distress caused them to exhibit an example of firmness and patriotism; the nobles and the wealthier citizens produced whatever stores they might by chance have had in their own houses, and sold them at a moderate price; the government allowed the people to procure stones for grinding the corn from the walls, the public buildings, and the largest of the houses; and all disaffection and dissatisfaction was easily suppressed.

Though he failed in producing at once the desired result, Sforza continued his plan of operations. About

the same time, he received from Venice a reinforcement of two thousand infantry, under the command of Marcellus. With these he took several more towns and strong places, almost without any opposition. Nearly all the cities in the vicinity of the lake of Como, with the exception of the town of Como itself, surrendered to him. Piccinino, who was now commanding for the Milanese, though he did not dare openly to oppose him, attempted to make a diversion in favour of his employers. For this purpose he left Milan, with a considerable body of men, very early in the morning, entered the territory of Pavia before sunrise, and carried off a considerable quantity of cattle from a place within one mile of the town itself, where the inhabitants of the surrounding country had placed them. He then attacked Chiarella, a strongly fortified place between Pavia and Milan. It was not long, however, before the commandant of the garrison at Binasco, which, it may be recollected, had been taken not very long previously by Sforza, received intelligence of what was going on, and marched forth to the rescue. Piccinino, on seeing him approach, retired to the monastery of Caravalle.

Not long afterwards, an ambassador from Florence arrived in Sforza's camp. He begged to assure him of the best wishes of Cosmo de' Medici, and the chief men of the republic; but stated that, as their resources had been exhausted by the war with Alphonso, they were unable to supply him with money. He promised, however, in token of their friendship and support, to remain

in his camp until he had succeeded in making himself master of Lombardy. Though Sforza would, of course, have preferred money to good wishes, there is no doubt but that the open and avowed support of a man like Cosmo de' Medici must have strengthened his cause in the eyes of Italy, and may, in the same measure, have contributed to his ultimate success.

Being now in possession of nearly all the towns in the vicinity of Milan, he proceeded to carry on his operations beyond the Ticino. He first turned his attention to the important city of Novara, which had been taken by the duke of Savoy in the unsettled state of the affairs of Milan. He ordered boats to be brought from Pavia to construct a bridge across the Ticino. Having invested the city on all sides, he summoned the inhabitants to surrender, accompanying his summons with the usual threat of abandoning them to the pillage of the soldiers, should he take it after their refusal." As the fortifications were in a bad state of repair, and as there was no force at hand to relieve them should they hold out, they had nothing left but to obey. Their example was soon followed by the inhabitants of the other towns; Romagnano, the only one where any resistance was experienced, was after its capture given up to the victors. The booty found therein, along with the ransom paid for the prisoners, is said to have been as good as several months' pay. While he was in this neighbourhood, the city of Tortona, which, it may be recollected, had been taken possession of by him nominally for the Milanese, but in reality for himself, and had been finally

taken for the former by Bartolomeo Collio, was divided into two factions—the one which called itself Guelf, being in favour of the Milanese republic; the other, bearing the opposite appellation of Ghibelline, supporting the man who aspired to be its duke. The latter party, taking advantage of his vicinity, sent to him to say that, if aided by a sufficient force, they felt sure that they would be able to put him in immediate possession of the city; and on the appearance of five hundred of his cavalry, they performed their promise. He then took the city of Alessandria, and assigned it to the marquis of Montferrat, much against the wish of the inhabitants, who all preferred to be subjected to him.

Intelligence was then brought to him that a certain friend of his had agreed with the garrison of Parma to surrender to him on the first favourable opportunity; he therefore sent his brother Alexander to settle matters. The latter arranged that a considerable part of the garrison at Piacenza, along with a detachment from Brescia, should form a junction with a few others of his adherents who were in the Parmese territory, and forthwith march upon the city. Unfortunately, however, for the success of this plan, one of the commandant's letters to the Venetians had fallen into the hands of the Milanese, and made them aware of his intentions; and they, indignant at the discovery of his treachery, sent orders for the whole of the garrison to be put to the sword. The execution of this bloody, though certainly not unmerited act of vengeance, was only pre-

vented by their having received timely intimation of the discovery of their plot, and making their escape to some strongholds in the neighbourhood. As Alexander still continued to threaten the city with a considerable force, the Milanese sent Jacobo Piccinino to oppose him.

Whatever prejudices might have been excited against Sforza at Milan, his continued success made no small impression upon the minds of the people. Many of them looked on in fear and trembling, uncertain which way to turn themselves. Charles Gonzaga, to whom, as has been stated, the Milanese had intrusted the chief command of their affairs, feeling that he could not much longer make head against him, bethought himself how he might best turn this state of affairs to his own advantage. For this purpose he devised a plan of seizing the city of Milan himself—not, indeed, under any expectations of continuing to retain it, but under the hopes of exchanging it with Sforza for Cremona, or some important places in the vicinity of his ancestral possessions. He had already written to his friends at home to come to him in his present quarters, intimating to several of them that he had sundry good things in store for them. He was making arrangements for seizing the Signoria on a certain day, scouring the streets with his cavalry, and procuring parties of his adherents to shout out "Long live duke Charles!" It was not long, however, before some, who became suspicious of his proceedings, used every means in their power to persuade the citizens to maintain their liberty; besides which, there were others who, however they might have wished for

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a republic, began to weary of a contest in which success appeared at least to be doubtful; and the majority of them thought that, if they must submit to somebody, it would be better to be ruled by Sforza than by Charles Gonzaga. Among the latter was Georgio Lampugnano, who had on a previous occasion so effectually excited the minds of the citizens against Francesco. They also thought, that, if they must sooner or later have Sforza, they might make better arrangements for a constitutional government now than at a future time, after they had been conquered by him; and as Charles Gonzaga had never ceased to persecute them from the time that he had found himself thwarted by them, they were anxious under any terms to get rid of him. They therefore intimated to the former, that, if he appeared in the vicinity of the city, something might turn up to his advantage. They also ordered their general, Ventimiglia, to form a junction with him, along with his forces. As he was always attached to Sforza before he had quitted his army at a time that he supposed he was acting in concert with him, he was only too glad to execute their orders. He was received with the greatest friendship by his former commander-in-chief.

As it seemed now probable that Sforza would sooner or later be at the head of affairs at Milan, he was joined by many of those characters who, like the rats that always desert a foundering vessel, invariably leave the falling for the rising party. Several of those who had from time immemorial been his opponents in war, and were still called Braccians, after the founder of their

school of arms, flocked to his standard. One of them brought with him a body of two hundred horse that had belonged to Francesco Piccinino. It was not long ere this general also followed the example that had been set by many of his party. He happened at this time to be not very far from Landriano, the place whither Sforza had gone under the expectation of being at once made duke of Milan. Being in great want of money, men, and everything required to maintain his position, and beholding himself deserted by his friends and his troops, he made up his mind to join himself with the man whose fortunes now seemed to be more than ever on the ascendant. But, at the same time, deeming it advisable to keep two strings to his bow, just as he was about to betake himself to the camp of Sforza, he sent word to the opposite party at Milan that he hoped to rejoin them in the commencement of the spring. Many of Sforza's friends endeavoured to dissuade him from having anything more to do with such a faithless ally, saying that he really could not foresee to what amount of personal danger he might be exposed by admitting him within his camp. He, of course, knew him too well to place any reliance in him. Nevertheless, as his career had now come to a point in which any appearance even of increased strength would be of use to him, and as nothing could prevent his getting immediate possession of Parma, if his brother Jacobo were to withdraw his forces, he determined to make what use of the two brothers he could for the time. He also tried to attach Piccinino in some degree to himself by promising to him

his daughter Drusiana, whom the death of Fregoso at Genoa had left at liberty to make a fresh engagement. This alliance would make the fortune of any adventurer, should her father succeed to the duchy of Milan; and events then showed that great things might be expected even by marrying a natural daughter. But from this arrangement he could not expect more than a temporary adherence to his cause: as he himself had already lost much by the continued enmity both of his father-in-law and son-in-law, he was too well acquainted with the habits of his countrymen not to be aware that family connection never stood in the way of self-interest.

The arrival of Piccinino in the camp of his new master was followed by such explanations of past misunderstandings, and protestations of mutual friendship, as never take place between parties who really trust one another. The former declared that he had not been induced to join him through any pressure of circumstances, but that he had done so entirely from preference; that whatever he had promised he would faithfully perform; that he would do his duty in whatever station he might be placed, and never shrink from any danger by which the fortunes of his friend might be advanced. Sforza, in reply, assured him that he had not the slightest mistrust of him whatever; that he hoped that both his brother and himself would regard him as their best friend; that, for his part, he looked upon them both as his sons; that there never had been any enmity, but merely a glorious rivalry, between their late father and himself. When the inter-

view was over, many people suggested to Sforza that he had now an excellent opportunity of quietly getting rid of a man who had at all times been either a treacherous friend or a dangerous enemy. They added that they had ascertained, beyond all doubt, that he had made arrangements for joining the opposite party at Milan the instant he should see a favourable opportunity of doing so; that they had been informed that, before he had joined them, his soldiers had come to him and said, that, if he did not speedily do something for them, they would either desert him or send him a prisoner to the enemy; and that he had merely come to him as the only harbour of safety in the sea of his difficulties. Though all this was well known to him, he made a most magnanimous reply, which, as a good name was at that time of peculiar importance to him, may be supposed to have expressed his actual sentiments. He said that he preferred the risk of being killed himself to being guilty of the blood of one who had put himself under his protection; that he would behave in such a way to him that, if there was to be any quarrel between them, the fault should not be with him; that, even if he had just cause for killing him, the world at large would ascribe his conduct to motives of policy or revenge. On that very same day Piccinino returned to the place whence he had come, and despatched a letter to the king of Naples, saying that, although he was now serving under his enemy's banner, he hoped he would still consider him as his friend, and that of the republican party at

Milan ; that dire necessity alone had compelled him to act as he had done, and that he would rejoin his old allies on the very first opportunity. To send this letter in safety, he was obliged to apply to Sforza for a convoy through the cities that acknowledged his jurisdiction.

While Piccinino was treating with each of the rival parties, Sforza himself appears to have been carrying on a double negotiation with the Milanese. He had one correspondence with the chiefs of the old Ghibelline party, many of whom had been at first opposed to his pretensions, but were now willing to arrange terms on which they might receive him as their duke ; another with Charles Gonzaga, who hoped to get something for himself by withdrawing his opposition. Matters, however, did not proceed as favourably for him as he might at one time have expected ; the terms proposed by the former appeared to him so stringent that he haughtily rejected them ; and the latter, finding that he himself was gaining nothing, made use of an artifice to get rid of some of the leading men among his opponents. Letters written in cipher, and said to have been intercepted, were brought before the public, and interpreted ; and it seemed as if the writers of them had been making proposals to Sforza which were highly displeasing to the majority of the citizens. Whether these letters were genuine or not does not appear ; but, such as they were, they were sufficient to raise a storm of indignation against those to whom they were ascribed. The leaders of the opposite party did not dare openly to put them to death ; but pretending to

be very anxious for their safety, they advised them to escape by night out of the city, for the purpose of placing themselves under the protection of the emperor; and told them that they would give them an escort to Como, where they would find a supply of all things necessary for their journey. The people in question naturally hesitated to commit themselves to their enemies; but on receiving repeated assurances from Gonzaga that nothing hostile was intended, they set out as was desired. Instead of bringing them to Como, as they promised, their guards brought them, during the hours of darkness, to Monza, where they were cast into prison. Georgio Lampugnano, the chief man among them, was beheaded; another of them was brought to Milan and examined upon torture. In his agonies he accused several citizens of note, of whom some were executed, and others made a timely escape. The property of all who fled was confiscated; several others who were suspected were ordered to depart, and many, thinking Milan no safe place, voluntarily followed their example. Among the latter were the ringleaders of those who, when it had been proposed to make peace with the Venetians, had instigated the people to shout out "War, war!"

In this manner did Charles Gonzaga manage to clear Milan of a considerable proportion of its noble citizens. The government then fell into the hands of a party composed of the most audacious demagogues and the lowest order of citizens, who soon made their fellow-countrymen experience some of the worst evils of democracy.

They obliged those who were supposed to be attached to the exiled Ghibelline party to bear the whole weight of the taxation. One of their first acts was to publish an edict denouncing capital punishment against any one who should mention Sforza's name, except in terms of disparagement. They made some additional declarations about maintaining their liberty to the last, and added, that if by any chance they should be unable to do so, they would surrender to the devil or the Turkish sultan sooner than to Sforza. So complete was the reign of terror which they established, for the time, that many of the citizens, who desired nothing more than to be allowed to follow their avocations, were afraid to express any opinion whatever in public.*

Though Sforza was in hopes that he might gain the crowning object of his ambition by negotiation, he still continued to follow up his military operations. Fighting, as he now was, on his own account, he seldom allowed his troops much repose during the winter. His brother Alexander still remained in the vicinity of Parma, where he was opposed by Jacobo Piccinino. In the month of January 1449, the extreme cold had forced him to station his troops in cantonments in the neighbourhood of Filino, and Piccinino and the Parmese, taking advantage of this circumstance, had formed a plan for surprising them. At the same time Alexander himself was devising, along with Pietro Maria, the citi-

* The proscription of Sforza's name by the ruling party at Milan may recall Tacitus' description of a reign of terror under the imperial government of Rome:—"Memoriam quoque ipsam cum voce perdissemus si tam in nostrâ potestate esset oblivisci quam tacere."—*Agric.* 2.

zen who had promised to admit him within the city, a joint attack upon the Parmese. They were, however, anticipated by their enemies: their troops were driven in towards the city of Filino, and a smart battle took place beneath its walls. After it had been carried on for some time with various success, Piccinino's division was driven back with considerable loss by Alexander Sforza; and the former, immediately after his defeat, received intelligence of the treaty that had been made between Francesco Sforza and his brother. On this he at once abandoned the Parmese to their fate. They, however, though deserted at a most critical moment, did not lose heart: they retired in the most perfect order to the city, and prepared to defend it to the last. Alexander was in no condition to follow them, but he opened a fresh negotiation with some of the inhabitants to take Parma itself by surprise. The party that were favourably disposed towards him had managed to get possession of one of the gates, which they promised to open to his army. Their treachery, however, was discovered in time, and the infuriated citizens made a violent attack on the gate that was held by the traitors, under the hopes of getting possession of it before the enemy should make his appearance. The defenders of the gate knew that they could expect but little mercy from their betrayed countrymen, should they fall into their hands; and in order the more effectually to secure themselves from their violence, they let fall the portcullis. But this device, which for a time protected them from their fellow-citizens, served in the end to

save the latter from their enemies. On the appearance of Alexander's army at the gate, it was found impossible to lift the portcullis higher than would give sufficient space for a man to crawl under. A few of the light-armed cavalry, nothing daunted, threw themselves off their horses, and made their way into the city; but as their example was not followed, they were left to sustain a desperate conflict in the interior. Those that were not killed on the spot, afterwards expired of their wounds. The citizens, after having made a most successful sally, and driven back their enemy with considerable loss, attacked and set fire to a tower which was still occupied by the traitors. When they had compelled them to surrender, they vented their ire on them by putting them to various tortures and sundry kinds of death. One among them, who was known to be much attached to Sforza, and generally suspected of having been the chief instigator of their treachery, was hung from a window in the public hall, where his body was left for some time, to serve as a warning to others.

Shortly after this, Alexander Sforza was joined by Bartolomeo Collio, with a body of two thousand horse and five hundred foot. It soon became evident, even to the most sanguine of the Parmese, that they could not long sustain a conflict against the augmented forces of their enemies, more especially as within the last few months they had twice learned by experience, that in a city which, for nearly four centuries, had been divided into parties, it was impossible to depend upon the fidelity of all. They were still, however, as much

averse to being governed by Sforza as they had been when they closed their gates to him immediately after the death of Filippo Maria; and as they had formerly belonged to the family of Este, and retained no disagreeable recollections of their rule, they determined, after due consultation, to make an offer of their city to the present representative of that family. That prince happened then to be at Venice, and the offer of the Parmese was conveyed to him through his brother Borsio, the signor of Reggio. Being too prudent to do anything without the consent of his powerful neighbours, he at once referred the matter to their senate, stating his claims, and adding, that, if they did not wish him to have the city, the inhabitants would sooner see it added to the republic of St Mark than fall into the hands of Sforza. When he had stated his case, he was ordered to withdraw; and on being brought back to hear their determination, the doge Foscari addressed him in the following words: "There is none of our customs of longer date, or more rigidly observed by us, than that of strict adherence to our word. It is incumbent upon us to perform the whole of the covenant we made with Francesco Sforza concerning the cities, the towns, and the territories of the old duchy of Milan: therefore we neither want Parma ourselves, nor will we allow you to take it. If you wish to please us in this matter, you will use whatever influence you have with the citizens to persuade them to surrender to Sforza." When these words of the doge were made known to the Parmese, they saw

that there was no course left for them but to make the best arrangement they could with Alexander. As Alexander was not taking the city for himself, and as he was anxious to go to Pesaro on business of his own, he at once acceded to their propositions; and after having told them that these must be ratified by his brother, he went on his way. When the terms were brought to Francesco for his approval, he found many things in them which he did not like, and which, had they been in the first instance submitted to him, he would have refused. Nevertheless, for the sake of his reputation, he acceded to them all, and even promised in no way to molest one or two of the citizens who, in the words of his biographer, were the most hostile to him of the many enemies he had in Italy. After this, the Parmese admitted his soldiers within their walls and into the citadel, which they had refused to do before.

CHAPTER V.

CLOSE BLOCKADE OF MILAN.—NEGOTIATIONS OF THE MILANESE WITH THE DUKE OF SAVOY.—SFORZA LAYS SIEGE TO MONZA—IS FOILED BY PICCININO'S TREACHERY.—VENETIANS LAY SIEGE TO CREMA.—PROCEEDINGS OF THE SAVOYARDS.—SFORZA REMONSTRATES WITH THE DUKE OF SAVOY'S FATHER.—WAR ON THE BANKS OF THE SESSIA.—THE TWO PICCININI PASS OVER TO THE MILANESE—THEY PROCEED TO RELIEVE CREMA.—MELEGNANO SURRENDERS TO THEM, BUT IS RETAKEN BY SFORZA.—ROUTE OF THE SAVOYARDS.—ARREST OF WILLIAM OF MONTFERRAT.—SIEGE AND CAPTURE OF VIGEVANO.—SFORZA DEFEATS AN ATTACK MADE AGAINST HIM IN THE VICINITY OF PARMA.

WHILE the events above narrated were going on, Sforza was engaged in closely blockading the city of Milan. As it was still winter, he did not bivouac his troops in the open country, but stationed them in the villages and fortresses around. His forces, augmented as they had been by those of Piccinino and Ventimiglia, were sufficient, when thus placed, to occupy every side of the city; the canals which formed a communication with the Ticino were strictly guarded, and all the gates of the city, except one, were blockaded. Even at this one, egress and ingress were almost prevented by a force of six hundred cavalry, stationed at no very great distance on this road. By these means the Milanese were reduced to such straits that many thought they could not hold out much longer.

In this crisis, Charles Gonzaga deemed it advisable

to make a friend of his opponent, that when he himself failed he might do something for him. For this reason he gave him to understand that a large party in the city were growing heartily weary of the rule of the demagogues; that he would not be at all surprised at their opening the gates any day; that he would therefore advise him frequently to show himself in the vicinity, and to be on the alert to take advantage of anything of the sort that might occur. Above all, he recommended him to be outside the eastern gate of the city on the 1st of March, the day on which the elections for the new magistrates were to take place, and on which the popular feeling would be almost sure to display itself. Though Sforza frequently appeared near the city, he gained nothing by so doing, and on more than one occasion he had reason to suspect treachery on the part of his informant. But such conduct was too common in those days to have excited either indignation or surprise. Though he was again disappointed in his expectations of being admitted within the city, he continued to take possession of every village, monastery, castle, and stronghold of every description in the neighbourhood, so that the Milanese possessed nothing outside their walls. On one occasion, when they made a sally to relieve the monastery of Castellatio, they were driven back with considerable loss.

The ascendancy of the democratic party in the city was in nowise shaken either by the inconveniences which the prolonged blockade entailed upon the inha-

bitants, or by the continued success of their enemy. Events soon occurred which tended for a time to confirm it. The late duke's second wife, a daughter of the duke of Savoy, whom, as has been related, he had married in his early struggles against fortune, continued to reside at Milan; she had endeared herself to all classes by her bounties, and was respected for the propriety of her conduct—a virtue, perhaps, less common in those days than now. It is not improbable that she viewed with great jealousy the pretensions of a man who aspired to succeed to her husband in right of his natural daughter. Either for this reason, or it may be at the instigation of some of her family, who might have hoped to turn the war of the Milanese to their own account, she proposed to the leading citizens that they should send to the duke of Savoy for assistance. It need hardly be said that they lent a ready ear to her suggestions. As her father, who had been anti-pope in the days of the schism, had abdicated, the ducal throne was then occupied by her brother. He promised immediate compliance with their requests, and gave out, in a vaunting manner, that he would bring fifty thousand men against their enemies. To all who knew anything about the resources of that prince, it was evident that these numbers must have been a mere empty boast, and they may have been inclined to have placed but little reliance on a promise that was expressed in such exaggerated terms. But as many of the government of Milan had been taken from the ignorant multitude, the answer pleased them well, and it served both to

confirm their authority, and to re-establish the drooping spirits of the citizens. Sforza, who of course had information of all that was going on, tried in vain to show them that, mighty as these promises sounded, their performance was impossible: they continued more averse to him than ever, and assured him that, come what might, they would be ruled by anybody sooner than him. To all their contumelies he calmly replied that he was merely contending for his inalienable right, and that he was determined to have it; that hitherto he had used all his successes with the greatest moderation, and that nothing would grieve him more than to proceed to extremities; but that, if they persevered in their present insensate policy, he knew not what he might find it necessary to do. Though he never actually said that he would storm the city and pillage the inhabitants, it is obvious that he alluded to it throughout the whole of his discourse. And though the government continued unmoved, they took the utmost precautions that neither his speech nor the threats that were conveyed in it should be known to the multitude.

Sforza still hoped to reduce the city without attempting to storm it. Monza was almost the only place in the neighbourhood that remained in the hands of his enemies, and he observed that, in spite of all he could do, frequent communications were passing between it and both Vercelli and Milan. It seemed to him as if the taking of it would almost cut them off from their last resource. Though he himself remained in the vicinity of the city which was the grand object of his

ambition, he sent thither a considerable force under the command of some of his best generals, including Ventimiglia and Piccinino. But here he was doomed to lose more than he ever had done before by the treachery of the latter. Piccinino was ordered to lead his forces to the eastern side of the town; but instead of bringing them directly under the walls, so as to prevent all possibility of ingress or egress, he took up a position at a small village at about the distance of a mile. It was not long before a considerable breach was effected in the walls, and to all appearance the city must have fallen at once. The inhabitants sent to inform the Milanese that, if they were not immediately relieved, they must surrender the following day. The Milanese despatched thither a considerable body of troops under Charles Gonzaga, who managed to make his way to it by night, and effected his entrance on the side which Piccinino had been ordered to guard. Gonzaga, shrinking from a conflict with Sforza's army, and fearful of his vengeance should he fall into his hands, proposed that they should remain in the city and await the attack of their enemies; adding that, when they were driven back by so much larger a force than they expected, they would doubtless raise the siege in despair. But the citizens, eager to free themselves from the enemy, were not guided by this advice; they sallied forth before daybreak; and ere the besiegers were aware of their approach, they set fire to their tents, and inflicted no small loss upon them otherwise. Ventimiglia, however, and the other generals of Sforza, though taken unawares, did

not lose heart; they rallied their men, and even drove the enemy back to the ramparts. For some time they maintained a conflict there with the greatest bravery, under the expectation that Piccinino, who had been duly apprised of what had happened, would have come to their assistance; but no small confusion was caused among the troops by the burning tents in the rear; and the space between the fire on the one side, and the enemy on the other, was so small that they were unable to form in a regular line of battle. Finding that Piccinino was again playing the traitor, they retired in no small confusion to Canturio, without even being able to bring off any of their artillery. All their tents were consumed by the flames; their baggage, with the implements made use of in the siege, fell into the hands of the enemy. In addition to this damage, Sforza sustained no small loss in the death of Dulcius, one of the best and most trustworthy of his captains, who was wounded by a bullet in the knee, and a few days afterwards expired of spasm.

The Milanese were beyond measure elated at the turn which their fortune seemed to have taken. They appear, indeed, to have thought that their enemy would have been obliged to retire from the field till he could, in some measure, repair his loss. Acting on this supposition, they sent forth a body of men to retake the monastery of Castellatio. But Sforza had already experienced too many vicissitudes, and had too much confidence in his own resources, to be so easily cast down; and he ordered his troops to blockade the

city more closely than heretofore. On finding themselves still pressed by their enemies, the force that had set forth to relieve Castellatio retired with great precipitancy. Piccinino too, though he had inflicted much injury on Sforza, did not think that the time had yet come for openly breaking with him; he therefore endeavoured in the best manner he could to explain his conduct, and promised, upon receiving some more artillery, to continue the siege of Monza. Sforza, though it is needless to say he was not deceived, thought that he might still strengthen his cause by appearing to keep on good terms with him, and promised to have sent to him four more pieces of artillery from Cremona.

About this time a Venetian army, under Sigismund Malatesta, made its appearance on the Adda, and retook several of the cities which they had lost in the preceding year. Crema alone, of all the places in that neighbourhood, continued to hold out against them. The Venetians, as the Milanese had done previously, had been anxiously soliciting Sforza to attend to their interests in preference to his own; they now sent to request him that he would repair the loss he had inflicted on them at Caravaggio, by furnishing them with men and implements for the siege of Crema. In compliance with their entreaties, he sent them six hundred cavalry, and a number of artisans to make implements. But events soon happened which caused him to turn his attention to a different quarter.

The duke of Savoy, though he failed to fulfil the magnificent expectations which he held out to the

Milanese, gladly availed himself of the opportunity that was offered to him of extending his dominions under the pretext of succouring his allies. For this purpose he collected together six thousand men in Vercelli, under the command of an officer named Compecius. One of his first measures was an attempt to surprise the important city of Novara, which was only twelve miles from their headquarters. He sent thither a force of a thousand men, who managed, under cover of night, to scale the walls, and actually effected an entrance into the citadel. They had already occupied about half of the building when the guards awoke, and the whole garrison arose with a mingled shout of terror and surprise. The Savoyards were now as terrified as they had hitherto been audacious. Though the number of the defenders did not exceed two hundred, they fancied that the whole city had risen upon them; their terror was aggravated by the circumstance of their not expecting quarter, which they themselves had never been accustomed to give, and they thought only of seeking safety in flight. The commandant of the citadel, taking every advantage of their panic, succeeded with his small body of troops in capturing a considerable number of them before they could effect their escape. After this the Savoyards confined themselves to laying waste the country and taking the castles and villages. This they did with a cruelty which contrasted strangely with the practice of the Italians. Not content with destroying and pillaging whatever came in their way, they murdered men, women, and children alike. Such was the terror

that their name inspired among a population who were so little accustomed to the sight of blood, that even before their approach the inhabitants of many places sent to say that they were willing to submit to them.

Sforza, on seeing himself attacked in this quarter, sent to remonstrate with Amadeus, the father of the reigning duke. He said that he ascribed this attack entirely to him, and that surely his endeavours to establish his rights against a certain party at Milan ought not to have provoked his interference. He also reminded him that, if from any particular circumstances he had felt himself bound to assist this party, it would have been Christian like and honourable to have begun by making a formal declaration of war. He trusted, therefore, that he would at once have restored to him all the places in the Novarese that had been taken by the soldiers of his son; at the same time, if he was determined to continue his injustice and aggression, he wished him to recollect that he was in alliance with the powerful republics of Florence and Venice, who were bound to assist him. To this Amadeus made a reply rather unbecoming one who had for some time set up to be the head of a mild, unambitious, and peace-making religion. He said that, as he had resigned all his temporal possessions to his son, and was entirely given to his spiritual avocations, he could not interfere; but that he for one could not see why his son should give back a single thing that he had taken, or why he should in any way alter his policy; and that those who wished to live on good terms with the Savoyards should recollect that

from time immemorial it had been their custom not only never to renounce their claim to anything they had ever possessed, but even to continue to encroach more and more upon the possessions of their neighbours.

The count, in no small degree irritated by the response of the late anti-pope, determined to repel with all his force this unprovoked aggression of his son. His first plan was to send an expedition against them under the command of Jacobo Piccinino. That general had of his own accord offered to undertake its command, on the condition that he was not to be associated with his brother. But the latter, on hearing of the arrangements that were in progress, and thinking that such a favourable opportunity of injuring Sforza by his treachery was not to be passed over, sent word to him that if his brother went he must go thither also. Much as Sforza mistrusted him, he did not wish to give him cause of complaint, or to proclaim his want of confidence to the public. But that he might not all at once endanger his forces, by allowing a traitor to command them in the face of a formidable enemy, he ordered Jacobo to cross the Po, and to join his brother in the Milanese. At the same time, he, in order to rivet the fidelity of the former, formally betrothed to him his daughter Drusiana, in earnest of his previous engagement, but deferred the celebration of the wedding till such time as he should get possession of Milan; and, that he might effectually guard against the treachery of the brothers, he intrusted the chief command of the war against the Savoyards to Bartolomeo Collio.

That general, as has already been mentioned, was in the command of the Venetian forces that had been sent to assist Sforza; hence he could merely use them in fulfilling the stipulations of his employers, and could not be expected to engage in any of the count's private wars or ulterior designs. As these stipulations were that they should assist him in acquiring possession of all the territories that had belonged to Philip at the time of his death, they were of course bound to repel any hostile force that might attempt to subjugate any part of these territories; but they were not obliged to carry on the war beyond their boundaries. As in the present instance the Venetians had no object in extending their own conquests to the west of the Milanese, and of course did not wish to see the power of Sforza, should he ever gain possession of Milan, unduly increased, they could hardly be expected to go beyond the terms of their agreement; and as Bartolomeo had already shown his jealousy of Sforza by attacking Tortona, it was not likely that he would exceed the wishes of his employers for the sake of doing him a favour. Hence Bartolomeo's war with the Savoyards was entirely defensive: he did his best to retake the strong places on the east of the Sessia that had submitted to them, and attacked them whenever they attempted to cross it; but he declined doing anything beyond it. In all the operations that he did attempt, he was completely successful: in a short time all the strong places, with only one exception, submitted to him; and on one occasion he defeated a considerable body of the enemy that had crossed

the river, and made a prisoner of their general. And though he himself refused to follow up his success by invading the territory of the duke of Savoy, he had under his command a considerable body of Sforza's own troops, who, having no such scruples, frequently made predatory excursions in the country beyond the river, in which they were often joined by numbers of the soldiers of the Venetians. Thus in a short time Sforza was quite freed from the incursions of his new enemies; but he was still obliged to reserve a considerable body of men near the Sessia, to keep them in check.

About this time his operations were further crippled by the treachery of his old enemies, the Piccinini. From the information that he had received from several quarters, he knew that they were meditating immediate desertion; and though he had never had any doubt as to their ultimate intentions, he had still entertained hopes that they might have remained nominally in his service until something should turn up in his favour at Milan, or at least until he should be able to make peace with the Savoyards, and be rejoined by the forces of Bartolomeo Collio. As he plainly foresaw that their open defection, in the present crisis of his affairs, would considerably injure his ultimate chances of success, he was in no small strait how to act with regard to them. His most expeditious, and possibly his safest course, would have been to put an end to them both, or at least to throw them into captivity, for then they could never again injure him, either by foul means or by fair; and as they had so often committed acts deserv-

ing death, he could not be restrained by any scruples of conscience from doing so. But, at the same time, he felt that, aspiring as he did to hold a place among the sovereigns of the Peninsula, a good name was worth more to him than a considerable body of troops, and that he would probably suffer more by the loss of it than by any act of the treacherous, though not very talented, brothers. Though in his own mind he had not the slightest doubt either of their former misdoings or their present perfidious intentions, he was not in possession of any written documents or proofs, wherewith he might justify himself to others; and in the absence of these, he well knew that any act of severity would afford material for slander to his enemies, and might arouse even the misgivings of his friends. After some deliberation he made up his mind to behave towards them as if he neither knew nor suspected anything; and being anxious to resume the siege of Monza, which only a short time before he had been compelled to relinquish through their treachery, he assigned to them the same post which they had formerly held on the east of the city. He was even about to proceed to their camp to give them their orders in person, but was restrained from doing so by the remonstrances of his friends. But the brothers ere long came to him to hear his pleasure—

"making fair show,
And hiding with false faces what their false hearts did know." *

They then obtained his permission to remain where they were one day longer, promising immediately after-

* *Macbeth*, Act i. scene 1.

wards to repair to the place that had been allotted to them. When the appointed day came, they marched with all their troops into the city of Monza. The inhabitants had been prepared to receive them, and on their arrival they endeavoured to persuade them to make a sally on the besiegers. They refrained, however, from doing so, when they saw that their commander William, marquis of Montferrat, was in a position to defend himself till such time as he could receive succours from Sforza. Shortly after this, William, not having sufficient force remaining to prosecute the siege, departed, though without any molestation from the garrison; and the Piccinini marched with their forces, consisting of three thousand cavalry and one thousand infantry, to Milan, where they were received with a species of triumph.

Intelligence of these events was brought to Sforza while he was engaged in the performance of mass. Though they must, in no small degree, have deranged both his plans and his prospects, he did not betray the slightest agitation of any sort, but calmly remained where he was till the conclusion of the ceremony. He then gave orders for his wife to retire to Pavia, and summoned his generals to a council of war. They were almost all of opinion that, weakened as they now were by the defection of the Piccinini, and the necessity of detaching a part of their forces to keep the Savoyards in check, it would be no longer safe for them to extend through the Milanese, but that they ought to concentrate them in one position, in order to be able effec-

tually to resist any attack of the enemy. But however prudent this advice might have been, Sforza, fearful lest his acting in this manner should be ascribed to either weakness or fear, positively refused to adopt it. And seeing that his men were in no small degree downcast by recent events, he endeavoured to revive their spirits by the all-powerful charm of his eloquence: he told them that, however the accomplishment of their wishes might be deferred, it was still as certain as ever; that the Piccinini were but incompetent generals, and that the Milanese would soon find out that they would have been better without them; that, for his own part, he would sooner have them openly opposed to him than working against him by their intrigues, while they pretended to be his friends; and that, for the present, all they had to do was to take care never to be taken by surprise.

The hopes of the Milanese were in no small degree elated by the arrival of the Piccinini; and their leaders were now loud in their boastings that they would, in a few days, clear their territory of the enemy. They made several sallies, under the expectation of doing so. But seeing that they made no impression, and that the enemy continued, as before, to occupy the whole of the country around, they changed the plan of their operations, and sent an expedition to the relief of Crema, under the command of the Piccinini and Gonzaga. Its success at first must have surpassed even their most sanguine expectations. While they were on their way thither, the town of Melegnano, which had been

intrusted by Sforza to the care of the Piccinini, and had been left by him in an almost defenceless state, fell into their hands. Sigismund Malatesta, the commander of the Venetian forces at Crema, having heard of the change in the prospects of Sforza, retired on their approach; and shortly afterwards, the town of Melzo, with the greater part of the implements that had been destined for the siege of Monza, fell into the hands of the Milanese.

These events were sufficient to convince Sforza that, if he meant to preserve his footing in and around the Milanese, he must be up and acting. He first marched to Melegnano, a place which is described by his biographer as being the most important for the carrying on war, and inflicting every possible injury on the Milanese. He took the place itself, without experiencing almost any resistance, and managed to save the inhabitants from the cupidity and lusts of his soldiers. The enemy's forces, of course, made their escape into the citadel; and though its mason-work was remarkably strong, and though it was surrounded by a deep trench which was then filled with water, he prosecuted the siege of it so successfully that, after six days, the garrison promised to surrender if, within three days, they were not relieved. Before the expiration of that time, however, the Milanese generals approached with an army, consisting, it is said by all historians, of thirty thousand men. But of this large force ten thousand only were regular troops; the remainder were volunteers, who, out of a passionate desire to maintain their present constitution, had joined their ranks—a fact which,

when we consider the reluctance of the Italian citizens at that age to serve as soldiers, shows how unpopular Sforza must have been with a certain class at Milan. And though, of course, they were undisciplined, and could not do much in close fighting, most of them were armed with guns, which, as yet, had not been used in Italian warfare, and which, though it was probable they could not send a ball either with much precision, or with sufficient force to injure men clad in heavy armour, might, from their very novelty, cause no small annoyance and terror.

Against these numbers, Francesco Sforza, having collected his troops from Pavia and other places, was able to oppose a body of thirteen thousand disciplined soldiers, well accustomed to victory. Piccinino was perfectly aware that his multitude of recruits could not stand long before them, and that, if he did not carry the day at once by the mere appearance of numbers, they might probably be driven back, and cause no small confusion among his regular troops. He therefore thought it better to endeavour to persuade Sforza to raise the siege than to risk an engagement. With this view he sent him word that, though he was now opposed to him in war, he had never ceased to regard him with friendship and respect; that he really should be loth to see his whole army destroyed or routed, but that, as he then was in command of sixty thousand men, and as he would be joined in the course of the engagement by William of Montferrat, this result would be inevitable if he were to attack him on the following day; that he therefore

entreated him, for his own sake, to raise the siege, and to retire during the night.

The receipt of this message filled Sforza with joy: he well knew that nothing would give Piccinino greater pleasure than to be able to annihilate him, and that, if he were really in a condition to do so, he would be the last man to give him timely warning to enable him to make his escape; and he felt convinced that his present step was taken because he felt doubtful of the result of an engagement. He sent word in reply, that he was much obliged to him for his information, but that he himself knew perfectly the character and the intentions of every man in his camp; that he was exceedingly rejoiced to hear of the great number of his soldiers, as he would have so many more prisoners, and so much more booty; and that he would even save him any further trouble by beginning the attack himself.

During the night he had all his workmen employed in levelling the inequalities of the ground between his own position and that of the enemy—a measure which, as his own force consisted entirely of well-disciplined troops, and his enemy's strength lay in no small degree in skirmishers and sharpshooters, was of the very greatest importance. But before commencing the attack, he found that the substance of the message which had been sent to him had been artfully spread among the soldiers, and that they were in no small degree terrified at the report both of the numbers and of the new weapons of their adversaries. Sforza did his best to convince them of the exaggerations that had been made use of with

respect to the former, and of the inefficient nature of the latter. He made the most admirable preparations for the approaching battle. He well knew that the enemy's greatest advantage lay in the mere appearance of numbers; that a large part of the multitude opposed to him were undisciplined volunteers, who would not stand before his men in a close fight; and that if these were once to give way, his own soldiers would regain heart, and the crowd of fugitives could not fail to embarrass the regular troops upon whom they would be driven back. To accomplish this result, he put two hundred of his very best cavalry under the command of William of Montferrat, whom he ordered to lead the attack: he gave them particular directions to continue sabering and riding down the enemy, but on no account to halt to make prisoners, threatening the penalty of death to any one who should do so.

No plan more likely to spread havoc among the ranks of his opponents could have been adopted; and when we consider the great prestige of his name, and the incapacity of the opposite generals, it is almost certain that, if his enemies had awaited him, it would have been crowned with success. But they on finding that, so far from being terrified into raising the siege, he was actually about to attack them, did not dare to await him, and retired to Milan, giving out that the citadel had capitulated before their arrival. On their part the garrison, seeing that the relieving force had entirely disappeared, surrendered according to their engagement.

If Sforza's talents stood him in good turn in this emergency, the display which he then made of them inspired some of his contemporaries with an admiration which was in the long run prejudicial to him. While he was going through the camp, giving orders and making arrangements, he was accompanied by Marcellus, the Venetian general, who had continued to abide with him since his alliance with his countrymen. The latter afterwards declared that, highly as he had always thought of the abilities of the great captain, he had until that day no idea of his skill in military matters, his admirable tact in managing the tempers of the soldiers, his quickness in council, his readiness in action, or the great admiration with which his troops regarded him, and the implicit obedience which they paid to his orders. He then expressed his conviction of the danger that would accrue to his countrymen if they were to allow such a man to be Duke of Milan; that if he were once well established as such, he would never rest easy till he had enlarged his boundaries at the expense of his neighbours; but that if, on the other hand, they were to allow the Milanese to remain subject to their present rulers, they must at no distant period come under their domination. These impressions, which he lost no time in communicating to the senate at Venice, soon afterwards produced their effect.

The regaining of Melegnano left Sforza at liberty to continue his operations in the Milanese. He still cherished the hopes of entailing such privations on the citizens as would make them discontented with their

present government, and cause a rising in his favour. To do this more effectually, he ordered a number of reapers and mowers to sally forth from Pavia and Novara, and to cut down and carry off whatever they could find upon the land.

Another piece of good fortune occurred, sufficient in no small degree to restore the hopes of Sforza's partisans. Skirmishes still continued to take place between the Savoyards and the Venetian and Sfortian troops on the banks of the Sessia, but without any very decided success, till one day a considerable body of each met, more by accident than otherwise, near Borgo Maniero. Though the Sfortians and Venetians were considerably inferior in numbers, nevertheless, as they looked upon the Savoyards as barbarians, they determined for the honour of their common country not to decline the encounter. The Savoyards, observing the comparative smallness of the attacking force, and beholding a wood of considerable extent in their rear, began to suspect, as the Gauls* did when they entered Rome, and as Machiavelli† advises all people to do when they observe an enemy placing themselves in a notoriously disadvantageous position, that some ambush was laid for them. They therefore thought it prudent to adopt measures to save themselves from what they thought an imminent danger of being overwhelmed by superior numbers; so, alighting from their horses, they formed a circular palisade of stakes sufficient to retard the advance of the

* LIVY, lib. v. cap. 38.

† MACHIAVELLI, *Discorsi*, lib. iii. cap. 48.

enemy's cavalry; and from behind this they inflicted great damage on them with their arrows. The Italians were driven back in some confusion, and the Savoyards, seeing that no fresh forces appeared, left their palisade to follow them, and became scattered in the pursuit.

Bartolomeo Collio, having received intelligence of what had happened, and seeing a considerable body of the enemy in the vicinity of his own headquarters in pursuit of the fugitive Sfortians, called a council to deliberate what should be done. But at the same time, Salernitanus, who had always been a steady adherent of Sforza's, said that, as the honour of their common country was at stake, this was a time for action, not for deliberation, and put himself at the head of a thousand horse, with which he galloped forward. As the Savoyards were scattered and disordered, they immediately recoiled before the charge of a compact body of men; the example of Salernitanus was soon followed by Bartolomeo and the other Italian generals, who, now that their national feelings were roused, little heeded the exact terms of any treaty. The Savoyards, having brought up all their forces to repel the combined attack that was now being made upon them, rallied within the circular palisade, where a protracted, and, what was rare in those days, a sanguinary combat ensued. But though they fought with bravery, they were unable to stand before the superior skill of the Italians; and after a great number had fallen on the spot, they broke from their ranks, and fled in confusion. The victors followed them till the close of the day, and having taken nearly all the chief

captains of the enemy, they sent them prisoners to Sforza, who, having received their parole that they would not bear arms against him during the remainder of the war, gave them their liberty. So highly elated was he at the result of this battle, which completely subdued the new enemy whom the intrigues of Philip's widow had raised up, that he said it much more than compensated for the loss he had sustained in the desertion of the Piccinini. But the blood that was shed thereat filled the Italians, who were accustomed to a very different species of warfare, with horror, and, as M. Sismondi remarks, may have paved the way for their easy submission to the French in the following century.

Though the attack of the Savoyards had failed, they had, nevertheless, done signal service to the Milanese by effecting a diversion in their favour. The great object of the latter, as has already been remarked, was to gain time: they knew that Sforza had not means of his own to continue a protracted contest, and they hoped that the Venetians would soon get tired of waging war merely for him. Hence every fresh enemy that even threatened him, and every city of his that made even the semblance of a revolt, benefited their cause; the temporary desertion or disaffection of every captain, however incompetent—every doubt they could cast upon the fidelity of any one in his camp—was of use to them. It was not long before they were favoured by two events of this nature. The inhabitants of Vigevano, the most important city in the territory between the

Ticino and the Sessia, having driven out their commandant, hoisted the colours of the Milanese republic. Sforza also had received several hints that William of Montferrat meditated leaving him, for the purpose of securing Alessandria and Bosco for himself. As the loss of Vigevano might entail upon him that of the whole of the country between these two rivers, he determined, loth as he was to absent himself from the immediate vicinity of Milan, to repair in person to retake the city; and he managed, by a polite artifice, to defeat the intentions of Montferrat. While he was with his troops endeavouring to construct a bridge over the Ticino, in the immediate vicinity of Pavia, he invited him to come to that city to visit his wife; and after he had been in this manner lured into the citadel, he was given to understand, in the civilest manner possible, that he must remain there for the present. At the same time, his captor took care that all his property should be respected, and his dominions should be preserved for him. After having finished, not without some little delay, the bridge over the Ticino, Sforza repaired to Vigevano, determined to prosecute the siege with the utmost celerity, that he might return as soon as possible to the place where he deemed his presence was of the greatest importance.

The details of this siege are interesting, as exhibiting both the military science of the Italians, and the determination with which, when their feelings were thoroughly roused, they could still fight for their liberties. Time was equally important to both parties—to Sforza, as

every day's absence from the Milanese diminished his chance; to the besieged, as they hoped that the republic would send a force to relieve them, or at least to effect a diversion in their favour. Encouraged by the Milanese soldiers in their garrison, and by hearing that Piccinino had been sent to Sepri, they disputed every inch of ground to the last. Though their powder was soon exhausted, they defended themselves bravely with swords, javelins, and all the other weapons which had been formerly in use. When their walls began to crumble before the artillery of the enemy, they erected behind them a great mound of earth, which they protected by sacks of wool from the cannon-balls.

Sforza was much vexed by the loss of time thus caused, and determined to do what he could to take the city by a *coup-de-main*. He had, at the commencement of the siege, constructed wooden towers in different places, from which his soldiers were able to inflict considerable annoyance on the enemy whenever they appeared on their walls. He now divided his army into eight bodies, with which he purposed to attack the city successively, thinking that neither the numbers nor the courage of the besieged would be able to withstand the continued onset of fresh troops. He promised one hundred pieces of gold to the first who should make good his ground within the city, fifty to the second, and twenty-five to the third. The chief command was intrusted to one Donatus, a Milanese officer who had earned great reputation at the siege of Piacenza. The appetites of all were in no small degree whetted by

the recollection of the spoil which had been obtained in that city.

Against these dispositions the inhabitants, who felt that, after their protracted resistance, they could expect but little mercy, prepared to defend themselves with all the resolution of despair. Early in the morning they crowded the churches, and prayed most fervently to be delivered from the impending calamity; and whether it was that they really believed in their efficiency, or that they thought that the sight of all that was deemed most sacred might inspire spirit into their defenders, and some superstitious awe into their aggressors,* they carried forth the pictures of holy personages and the relics of the saints. At first the men continued to fight sword in hand with the assailants, while the women stood beneath to supply them with weapons and missiles; but the latter, in the course of the day, clothed themselves with the uniforms, and put themselves in the places, of those that fell. Those that remained on the walls showered down hot water, burning pitch, stones and beams, on the devoted heads of the assailants. Seven of the divisions of the besieging army had already been repulsed, when their general ordered them to desist from the assault, and to annoy their enemy with missiles from the wooden towers. By

* More likely for the latter reason than the former. It is probable that the condottieri of the day entertained the opinion which Schiller (*Fiesco*, act v. scene 14) put into the mouth of Lomellino in the following century—"Seitdem das Pulver erfunden ist kampiren die Engel nicht mehr"—("Angels have left off fighting since the invention of powder.") But the soldiers, however little they might have obeyed the religion of the gospel, were probably not free from superstition.

this measure the numbers of the defenders were so much thinned that they were unable to repel the next attack; several of the assailants soon made good their position on the walls; the citizens were told that the enemy was among them, when they were saved by an accident from the dreaded fate. One of Sforza's men, a commander of a division, while standing on the wall, received a blow on his head, which precipitated him upon those who were at that moment actually engaged in the ascent. The foremost men of the advancing column were thus hurled down upon their comrades beneath, and caused no small panic and confusion in their ranks. The defenders seized the opportunity; and, though only a few minutes before they had given up fighting in despair, and were each thinking how they might make the best terms for themselves, they now began to shower down upon them the weapons which they had used with so much effect in the morning. Sforza deemed it useless to continue the attack, and recalled his soldiers, determined to renew it early on the following day.

The Vigevans, though they had defended themselves bravely during the day, saw too plainly that they could not hold out any longer, and that their only chance of saving their property lay in a capitulation. Accordingly, before sunset, they sent to propose terms to Sforza. There was nothing that he would have liked better than to have punished them for their treachery, and to have kept up the somewhat drooping spirits of his army by the plunder of the city; but he

felt that, even if he were to make himself master of it on the following day, it might be some time before he could bring together his troops, who would remain there in search of plunder, around Milan; and as every movement was of importance to him, he consented, after some little deliberation, to accept their offer. The only condition which he added was, that they should rebuild the citadel, which they had destroyed after the death of Filippo Maria, and give up to him the leading men who had prompted them to rebel. These he confined in the castle of Pavia. During the night he had some little trouble in preventing his soldiers from breaking into the city in search of booty; but as he had great authority with his army, and as the citizens had been warned to be on their guard, there was no mischief done.

During the progress of the siege, Charles Gonzaga and the Piccinini retook several places of minor importance, and laid waste the territory of the Pavians. But Sforza, feeling assured that, if he retook Vigevano, he could easily repair whatever mischief might in the mean time be effected, was not diverted from his purpose either by the loss of the former or the cries of the latter for assistance. Offers were also made to Ventimiglia, who, it may be recollected, had on a former occasion gladly embraced an opportunity of leaving the service of the Milanese for that of his present employer, and who, perhaps, was the most attached to him of any of his generals. Ventimiglia was so incensed at the proposal that was now made to him, that he sent the bearers of it to Sforza, who did not hesitate to hang

them; and the count himself, after having left a thousand horse in Novara, lest the Savoyards should again show themselves in his dominions, returned to the territory of Milan.

As Sforza had been unable to bring the Piccinini to a general action since their last desertion of him, he resolved to punish their treachery by taking the places that belonged to them between Piacenza and Parma. He hoped by this measure also to make a demonstration to all the powers of Italy, as well as to the Milanese, of the real efficiency of his forces. Accordingly he ordered some of the officers on whom he could most depend to cross the Po with a body of men sufficient for the purpose. They soon took all the towns and strong places that had belonged to the treacherous brothers, experiencing very little resistance from any except Firenzuola, which required a forty days' siege to reduce. Of the forces that were taken prisoners in these towns only the officers were retained, while the soldiers were given their liberty on the condition that they would not again bear arms against Sforza.

In the mean time Nicolo Guerriero, an enemy of Sforza's, had been entreating the king of Naples to send a force to take Parma; and that monarch, ever mindful of what the great captain and his father had done against him, sent thither two divisions, one of a thousand horse and five hundred foot, under the command of Astorre, and another of five hundred, under that of Raimondo Amichino. Alexander Sforza undertook the defence of this territory for his brother. He easily per-

suaded the former of these generals to desist from his enterprise, and to disband his forces, on the receipt of a thousand pieces of gold from Francesco. He then repaired to Colornio, a town belonging to Nicolo Guerriero, who had brought this new enemy into the field. At his approach Nicolo fled for safety to Mantua. Raimondo Amichino having, to the no small indignation of the Sforzas, been allowed a free passage through the territories of the marquis of Este, who at that time professed to be in alliance with the Venetians, made an attempt to relieve Colornio; he was, however, completely defeated, and that town soon afterwards fell into the hands of Alexander. Thus the man who had attempted to make this new diversion against Sforza paid the penalty of his interference by the loss of his city, and the war in the Parmese terminated without further incident.

Sforza himself retook, without any difficulty, the places that, while he had been engaged in the siege of Vigevano, had fallen into the hands of his enemies. Most of them, indeed, returned to him without any resistance; Castellione, the only one that held out against him, was after its capture abandoned to the soldiers. He then continued as before to blockade the city, and to lay waste the territory of Milan. His position was now, perhaps, as good as it had been at any time since the beginning of the war: he was in possession of almost all the strongholds in the neighbourhood; he had completely defeated every attempt that had been made by the new enemies who had been incited

against him, and had let every one see that he had been able to maintain his position in spite of the desertion of the Piccinini. He was assured that he had still a powerful party in the city, although they were for a time silenced by the violence of their opponents. In this position he calmly awaited the approaching elections, hoping that he might weary his enemies into submission, but determined, should his present policy fail, to adopt more violent measures.

CHAPTER VI.

ELECTION OF MAGISTRATES AT MILAN.—NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN THE MILANESE AND VENETIANS.—CHARLES GONZAGA JOINS SFORZA.—NEGOTIATIONS FOR THE SURRENDER OF LODI AND CREMA.—INTERVIEW OF VENETIAN AMBASSADORS WITH SFORZA.—SFORZA'S ATTEMPTS TO TAKE MILAN—FRUSTRATED BY BARTOLOMEO COLLIO AND THE VENETIANS.—TERMS PROPOSED BY THE VENETIANS.—SFORZA DECEIVES BOTH MILANESE AND VENETIANS BY CONSENTING TO A TRUCE.—ALEXANDER SFORZA COMPELLED TO SIGN A TREATY AT VENICE, BY WHICH FRANCESCO DOES NOT CONSIDER HIMSELF BOUND.

ON the 1st of July 1449 new magistrates were elected at Milan. Those who had held the highest offices during the preceding months had rendered themselves extremely unpopular, both by the arrogance which they then displayed, and by the sufferings which their policy had entailed upon the people; and in the words of the historian of Milan, they were detested by all who wished to live well, or who had any pretence to nobility.* On the expiration of their magistracy they were cast into prison, and were succeeded by men of more aristocratic tendencies, and supposed not to be unfavourably disposed towards Sforza. But though his bitterest enemies had been incarcerated, his name was still under a ban; and such was the ascendency of the mob at Milan that, till it was known how they were inclined to receive him, no one dared make any propositions concerning him.

* Corio, part vi.

In accordance with the supposed wishes of the populace, the new magistrates commissioned a certain Henry Panigarola, one of their own countrymen, of the Guelf party, who happened at that time to be at Venice on business, to go before the senate and represent to them that, as they had at all times been such ardent supporters of liberty, instead of aiding an aspiring usurper in subjugating their nascent republic, they ought, on the contrary, to assist them in maintaining their independence against him. He laid the views and pleaded the cause of his countrymen with great effect before the senate, who referred the matter to a committee consisting of the doge and four of the principal citizens. At the same time, Marcellus, the Venetian ambassador in Sforza's camp, continued to give them the same advice as before; and he now further said, that he was convinced that all their efforts to place Sforza in Milan would be utterly useless. The committee finally decided that Panigarola should be entreated to remain in the city for the present.

Mean time Sforza, either unconscious or unmindful of these negotiations, continued his former plan of operations. He occasionally diversified them by taking a fortified place which had either remained in the hands of, or had recently revolted to, the enemy; but more, perhaps, for the sake of making a demonstration of his power, or of giving occupation to his troops, than for any positive advantage. In one of those undertakings he was much grieved at the loss of one of the most devoted and confidential of his adherents, by name Manno

Bariles, who, in attempting to pass the Lambro on horseback, was drowned, much in the same manner as his father had been in passing the Pescara. To show his respect for the deceased, he had his body conveyed to Pavia, where his funeral was conducted with the greatest pomp, and attended by the principal officers of his army. Shortly after this, the town of Pizzighettone, most important from its position on the Adda, revolted to him; and though he was embarrassed in consequence of a scarcity of provisions, and the breaking out of a fever in his camp which carried off some of his ablest officers, he was able to take the fortress of Cassano, which commanded the bridge over that river. About the same time Sigismund resumed his operations against Crema, whence the Piccinini had forced him to retire in the preceding year. Charles Gonzaga was proceeding to the relief of this town, when events occurred at Milan which caused a fresh disposition of parties.

In the beginning of September the magistrates who had been elected in July were deposed, and were succeeded by those who, at their accession, had been cast into prison. The violence of the extreme democratic party now became greater than ever, and they directed their fury against the two ex-magistrates, who were obliged to fly for their lives. One of them succeeded in reaching Sforza's camp; but the other, being unable on account of a lameness to escape from his pursuers, was brutally murdered. Overtures were again sent to the Venetians, and the former edicts which

forbad men to speak respectfully of either Sforza or his wife were renewed.

At this time Charles Gonzaga was at Lodi on his way to Crema. He had always been exceedingly jealous of the ascendency of the Piccinini, and doubtful of the ultimate chances of success of the Milanese, and he now affected excessive wrath at the murder of the ex-magistrate. Influenced either by his righteous indignation, or, more probably, as is hinted by the annalist of Italy, by motives of self-interest, he opened negotiations with Sforza; and he now proposed to put him in possession of Lodi, and to procure the surrender of Crema either to him or the Venetians. He, however, strongly recommended him to take it for himself, alleging that, if the Venetians once got it, they would probably make a separate peace for themselves with the Milanese. In return for this, he requested him, if ever he got possession of Milan, to give him a part of Cremona, and to allow him henceforward to rank among the foremost of his generals. Sforza replied that, as Cremona was the property of his wife, he could not dispose of it, but he agreed to give him Tortona in lieu of it; at the same time he said that he would have the greatest pleasure in complying with the latter part of his demand, and promised him a considerable stipend for his own services and the maintenance of his troops. Though Gonzaga had much set his heart on Cremona, so near to his native city of Mantua, he at once accepted the terms that were offered to him, and he forthwith arranged with the inhabitants of Lodi, who appeared to have

been much disgusted with the ruling faction at Milan, that after his departure they should admit Sforza's troops within the walls.

In the mean time the representations of Panigarola, and the letters of Marcellus, produced their due effect at Venice. The senate came to a resolution no longer to continue the war with the Milanese, or the payment of the stipend to Sforza. They sent messengers to inform the latter of their determination, and at the same time gave them directions not to depart from his camp until they had brought him round to their wishes. And the messengers had scarcely set out on their errand, when the arrival from Marcellus of information concerning the arrangements that had been made with Gonzaga about Lodi and Crema, caused the Senate to send an express after them, ordering them not to be too abrupt in their negotiations, but to dally with him till they should get possession of Crema.

When Sforza heard of the Venetian messengers' approach, he suspected the object of their visit, and, fearful lest it should transpire and cause fear and disaffection among his troops, he proposed to meet them at Ripalta, a town on the other side of the Adda. As he was about to proceed thither, several of his friends remonstrated with him on the imprudence of intrusting his person to those who, it was supposed, were about to become his enemies ; but though he must have clearly foreseen his approaching rupture with the Venetians, he was anxious to keep up the appearance of cordiality to the very last moment : he therefore turned a deaf

ear to their warnings, and proceeded with an air of confidence which might have been either real or assumed. On his meeting the messengers he accosted them with the usual compliments, and asked to know their pleasure. They at once told him that as the war was lasting much longer than had been anticipated, and as there did not seem to be any immediate prospect of his attaining his wishes, they had come to propose some accommodation between him and the Milanese; that as they knew his great abilities and his integrity, they would leave all arrangements to his discretion, and, as he had recently obtained new and almost unlooked-for success, the present seemed a most opportune moment for terminating the war with honour and advantage. He replied to them in the flattering tone usual with those who see through, but wish to feign ignorance of, the falsity of their friends. He said that he knew that the senate of Venice had in all its transactions shown itself superior to the other governments of Italy in integrity, justice, and faith; that for that reason he did not believe the hints which had been made to him of their being about, contrary to their most solemn engagements, to discard him, and to make peace with the Milanese; and that if such things were spoken of at Venice, he felt well assured that they came only from a few unprincipled citizens, and were scouted at by the majority. On one point he was anxious to inform them correctly: his prospects of success were very different from what they seemed to think, for he was now in possession of Cassano, and in

a very few days would have Lodi, and the only other towns which commanded the passes of the Adda, namely, Trezio and Bivio, would soon surrender; that after this it would be utterly impossible that the Milanese, cut off as they would be from all their communications with the other states of Italy, and already weakened by their internal dissensions, could hold out.

After the semblance of a negotiation, both parties went their way—Francesco to his army, the ambassadors to Bergamo, there to await the further decisions of their senate. The former then received a deputation from the Cremese, who declared that their countrymen dreaded nothing so much as being subjected to the Venetians, and entreated him to take their city for himself. Though the possession of Crema, lying as it did between Lodi and Cremona, would have been a matter of great importance to him, as consolidating the territory that he already possessed, nevertheless, as his availing himself of this offer would have hastened the approaching rupture between the Venetians and himself, and would have both justified them, and damaged him in the eyes of all Italy, and as he looked to do more by procrastination and by preserving his reputation than by force of arms, he thought proper to refuse it. He therefore replied that, much as it grieved him to decline the offer of a people who were so well disposed towards him, he had already promised their city to the Venetians, and would undergo any disappointment sooner than violate one jot or tittle of an engagement that he had solemnly made. On the

following day he went to Lodi accompanied by a considerable body of infantry, and was forthwith admitted within its walls. He then summoned the garrison in the fortress to surrender, saying that, if they did not do so forthwith, he would proceed to storm them with the whole of his available force; and as they merely wanted an excuse to justify their conduct to the Milanese, they obeyed without any delay. In this citadel Sforza found Arasmo Triulcio, who had always taken such an active part against him at Milan. The unfortunate captive endeavoured to stammer forth excuses for his conduct, but Sforza, though he was above taking vengeance upon him, sent him a prisoner to Pavia, the place where he confined all those who had the inclination and the power to injure him. Not long afterwards Crema surrendered to the Venetians, and Sforza repaired with the whole of his army to Vico Lambrato, within two miles of the eastern gate of Milan.

As the conquest of Crema must have deprived the Venetians of all reasonable grounds of dissatisfaction, he was not without hope that their apparent alliance with him would last till he could accomplish his wishes. Several reasons made him think that a period when he might do this was at hand: the Milanese were already suffering from scarcity; they were so divided among themselves, that it did not seem likely they could long hold together; Charles Gonzaga had already brought him a considerable accession of force, and his effective strength was daily augmented by a number of

deserters. But, as he was aware that the Venetians were only watching for an opportunity of dissolving their alliance with him, he felt that he had no time to lose, and he proceeded to take measures of a more decidedly offensive nature than hitherto, rather, perhaps, under the hope that he might thereby terrify the Milanese into submission, than with the intention of actually taking the city by storm. And there is no doubt but that he would have succeeded, if he had not been foiled, as of yore, by the treachery of his captains. Bartolomeo Collio, who commanded the Venetian soldiers in his army, had on many occasions shown himself jealous of his rise; he was now fully aware both of the intentions of his government and of the sentiments of Marcellus; he felt well assured that any lukewarmness on his part would not bring upon him their displeasure; and he determined that he, at least, should have no hand in making his brother condottiere duke of Milan.

All Sforza's measures on this occasion were selected with prudence, and undertaken with energy. His first attempt was to take the suburb that lay beneath the eastern gate of the city. This was defended by a trench of considerable magnitude, which, as it was now the month of December, he thought might be filled so as to afford a passage for his cavalry, and be crossed by his infantry between sunset and sunrise. To do this as rapidly, and with as little noise as possible, he selected the spot in which each division of his army was to cross at a certain hour of the night. When the appointed time came, Bartolomeo and the Venetians were not in

their places, and the former, on being sent to by Sforza, said that he could not come till he had all his forces together. In this manner he managed to retard the commencement of the enterprise till the appearance of daylight. Sforza, though he knew that his chances of success were now much diminished, determined to proceed. But his soldiers had not advanced far ere the Milanese became aware of his designs, and sent forth from behind the suburbs a well-directed shower of javelins, arrows, and bullets. So great, indeed, was the quantity of firearms, both artillery and hand-guns, used on the occasion, that the place was for some time enveloped in a thick cloud of smoke, and the assailants' troops were unable to discern their way. After two hours' hard fighting, Sforza retired. In this skirmish several men were wounded, and others were taken; but the Piccinini, who dreaded nothing so much as that the Milanese should hear Sforza well spoken of, refused to keep their prisoners of war within the city.

Sforza himself, though sorely vexed at the conduct of Collio, did not yet give up all hopes of success. It was not long before he agreed with a certain captain of cavalry, for a thousand pieces of gold, to put him in possession of the eastern suburb. But now Marcellus and Collio saw that, if they did not wish to behold Sforza in immediate possession of Milan, they must openly declare their intentions; they therefore made no scruple in informing him that the preliminaries of peace had already been settled at Venice, and that none of their soldiers should either enter the town, or in any way

injure the property of the Milanese. On the very day on which it had been arranged that he should take the suburbs, the Venetian ambassador arrived in his camp, confirming the unwelcome intelligence; and after some preliminary dissertations, to the same effect as those he had made before the taking of Crema, he proposed to him the following terms:—That he was now to desist from making war against the Milanese, and to leave them in the undisturbed possession of all the country between the Po, the Adda, and the Ticino, with the exception of the city and territory of Pavia; that he was to keep for himself all the other cities which he had taken in Lombardy, and which had belonged to his father-in-law at the time of his death; that the city of Lodi, which was situated on the Adda, was to be given up to the Milanese. Twenty days only were to be given to him to consider the proffered conditions. In order to incline him to accept them, the ambassador said, contrary to the truth, that the senate had concluded an alliance, offensive and defensive, with the pope, the king of Naples, the republic of Florence, and the duke of Savoy; and that all these powers would unite with them in maintaining the independence of Milan.

Though Sforza had for some time past been aware of the intentions of the Venetians, nevertheless the receipt of this message, just when he thought his greatness was ripening, overwhelmed him with disappointment. He made a reply of considerable length to the ambassador, in which, after having endeavoured to depict the con-

duct of the Venetian republic in somewhat the same colours as his own behaviour had, on a former occasion, been drawn by the Milanese, he informed them that they were mistaken in several of the facts to which they had referred in justification of their proceedings; for that he had now brought matters to such a crisis that he must very soon get possession of the city of Milan; that, though the mob were opposed to him, the majority of the nobles were in his favour; and that he had at hand supplies of food sufficient to maintain an army much more numerous than his own for any length of time. He acknowledged that he was in want of money, but he knew that his soldiers were so attached to him that they would remain with him though their pay was in arrears; that, so far from his being a burden to the Venetians, he would repay to them anything they would now advance him, and he would never ask them for the balance of the stipend that they owed him. He concluded by requesting the ambassador to return to Venice, and bring the matter once more before the senate for their reconsideration. This, however, he refused to do, saying that it was not the manner of the senate to rescind any resolutions which, like the present, had been duly sanctioned by a committee.

Seeing that he could prevail nothing with the ambassador, he asked for one day to consider their propositions. There is no doubt but that, from the very first, he himself had made up his mind as to what part he would take; but he dreaded lest the Milanese should sally forth upon his army, while they were weakened

and disordered by the desertion of the Venetians, in which case he thought that the latter, ever eager to obtain a share in the spoils of war, might join his enemies. He therefore availed himself of the respite that was allowed him to retire to Culturano. Mean time his own soldiers, who had expected ere long to share in the honours and rewards that awaited him, were beyond measure incensed with the Venetians, and were with the greatest difficulty prevented from making an attack upon those that still remained in or near their camp. Whenever their officers or ambassadors made their appearance, they were assailed with hisses and opprobrious epithets, and some of them were even stripped of their armour and robbed. But Sforza, determined that the Venetians should have no cause of complaint against him, did his best to bring the offenders to justice, and insisted that all their property should be restored to the officers. And when their envoy, Marcellus, who had remained with him during the whole period of their alliance, was taking his departure, he accompanied him to the distance of five miles from the camp, in order that he might more effectually protect both his person and his property.

After the departure of these ambassadors, Sforza received information that the Venetians were concentrating a considerable force behind the Adda. This, of course, convinced him that they were sincere in their intention of joining the Milanese, should he continue the war. This he was resolved to do; but as he was no match, unaided, for their combined armies,

he scrupled not for a time to conceal his intentions, by means of double-dealing of the same sort as that which they had adopted towards him. He therefore granted a truce of twenty days to the Milanese; and he sent his brother Alexander once more to make a semblance of treating with the Venetians, though he secretly forbade him to be a party to any arrangements which should exclude him from Milan. At the same time he despatched another message to Cosmo de' Medici and the Florentines, begging them to assist him.

As this armistice was granted at the sowing time, he was secretly in hopes that the Milanese would use as seed a considerable quantity of the grain that they had laid up in their city—an act which would serve him even more effectually than the continuation of the blockade. Nor was he mistaken. When the Venetian ambassadors first made their appearance in Milan, the unfortunate inhabitants thought their troubles were at an end, and made token of their joy by the lighting of bonfires, the sounding of bells, and the discharging of cannons. And when the enemy had retired to Custurano, and had granted them a truce for twenty days, they thought that these acts must have been done in anticipation of a general peace, for they little dreamed that he would have the audacity to oppose himself single-handed against them and the Venetians. So, instead of availing themselves of this respite to bring more provisions into the city, they brought their grain out of it into the country, hoping that they would once more be allowed to reap their harvests in peace. Nor did they

continue to keep their fortifications in order as before. The Venetians also were so far deceived as to discontinue the concentration of their forces behind the Adda. All this time he himself was engaged in negotiations with the Milanese governor at Trezo, which commanded a pass over the Adda, and from him he exacted a promise not to let the Venetians cross to join the Milanese. The only other pass which was not commanded by his troops was at Bivio, which he thought he could easily defend.

Unmoved by the remonstrances of Alexander, the Venetian senate obstinately declined to abate one jot or tittle of their demands. The former, to gain time, asked leave to send again to consult his brother. But the senate—in contradiction, it would seem, to all the laws of nations—replied that, if he would not sign the treaty as it was now presented to him, he should not be allowed to depart in safety from Venice. He forthwith signed the treaty, after which he left the city by night to convey to his brother Francesco the unwelcome intelligence.

On hearing what had passed, Francesco was in no small degree vexed, but as his ambassador had exceeded his authority, he did not think himself bound by his act. However, to satisfy his conscience, or to justify himself in the eyes of the other Italians, he called together and consulted an assembly of those who were most skilled in international and pontifical law, and received their permission to act as he pleased. He then declared his intention of prosecuting the war with the Milanese, and resisting the Venetians, should they make any attempt to co-operate with his enemies.

CHAPTER VII.

DEBATES AND MEASURES OF THE FLORENTINES.—DEATH OF FRANCESCO PICCININO.—SFORZA MAKES TERMS WITH THE DUKE OF SAVOY.—FURTHER ACQUISITIONS AROUND MILAN.—SKIRMISHES NEAR BIVIO—DEFEAT OF JACOBO PICCININO—SKIRMISHES AROUND THE LAKE OF COMO.—DEFEAT OF A BODY OF SFORTIAN CAVALRY.—UNSUCCESSFUL ATTEMPT AGAINST MONZA.—DISTRESSES AND CRITICAL SITUATION OF SFORZA'S ARMY.—PRIVATIONS AND SUFFERINGS OF THE MILANESE.—TUMULTS IN THE CITY—VAIN ATTEMPT OF THE GOVERNMENT TO APPEASE THEM.—MOB TAKE POSSESSION OF THE PALACE AND GATES—SEND TO TENDER THEIR SUBMISSION TO SFORZA—HIS TRIUMPHAL ENTRY.—FESTIVALS ATTENDING HIS CORONATION.

THOUGH Sforza's ambition and courage were generally known, his present resolution caused some surprise even among his friends. The Florentines, on hearing thereof, were for some time divided as to what part they should take; and though they did not come to a decision till the issue of the war was otherwise settled, their deliberations are not a little remarkable, as illustrating the opinions that were then entertained regarding Sforza. His friend, Cosmo de' Medici, who had been in constant communication with him, and is supposed to have assisted him out of his private fortune, now thought that the time was come when he might persuade the republic to do something for him also. But Neri di Gino Capponi, who had signalised himself by several victories, and obtained a considerable influence among the Florentines, opposed him in this; partly, it may

be from a real love of liberty, and some traditional hostility to the dukes, whose ambition his predecessors had for half a century kept in check; and in great measure also out of jealousy of his rival, Cosmo de' Medici, who was already too powerful for him, and would become still more so if his talented friend were to become ruler of Milan. He therefore endeavoured to persuade his countrymen that it would be much better for their welfare that Sforza should agree to the conditions proposed, than that he should continue the war. In the first place, he felt convinced that he was so disliked by the Milanese, that, sooner than surrender to him, they would put themselves under the rule of the Venetians —an event which would be detrimental to all parties. In the next place, supposing that he were to get possession of Milan, would not so great a state, when ruled by so great a soldier, be dangerous to the balance of power?—and as the latter had been bad enough as a count, would he not be utterly intolerable as duke of Milan? For every reason, it was better, as well for the Florentine republic as for Italy in general, that Lombardy should be divided into two states, which could never unite to do injury to others, and each of which, taken by itself, would be too small to be formidable. These considerations, he said, convinced him that it would be more for their advantage to maintain their former alliance with the Venetians, than to send assistance to the count.*

On the other hand, it was maintained by Cosmo de'

* MACHIAVELLI, *Ist.* lib. vi.

Medici, that it was utterly impossible the Milanese should preserve their independence, seeing "that their former constitution, their manner of living, and the continuance of parties of long standing, had altogether incapacitated them for self-government; and that, if Sforza could not succeed in making himself their duke, they must fall under the dominion of the Venetians. In such a case, he thought, nobody would be fool enough to hesitate whether he would sooner have for a neighbour a powerful friend, or a still more powerful enemy. Finally, there was no reason to suppose that the Milanese would of their own accord put themselves under the Venetians, merely because the count continued the war; for as he had a number of adherents in the city, while they, on the contrary, had none, when they found they must be ruled by somebody, their choice would undoubtedly fall upon him."*

The citizens were for some time uncertain as to whose counsel they would follow; at last they came to the determination to send ambassadors to his camp, with directions to see how he was getting on, and be guided accordingly. If they found him confident of success, they were to make a treaty with him immediately; if not, they were to postpone any direct settlement for the present. But before their arrival he had, without their assistance, obtained the great object of his wishes.

On the expiration of the twenty days' truce, Sforza, after he had made it publicly known that he was not bound by the acts of his ambassadors, took measures both

* MACHIAVELLI, *Ist.* lib. vi.

for continuing the blockade of Milan, and for preventing the Venetians passing the Adda. As winter had already set in, he allowed his troops to remain in cantonments; but he stationed one division of them near Milan, so as to prevent any provisions being brought into the city, and the remainder near Bivio on the Adda, ready to take the field at a moment's notice. In the mean time death freed him from an enemy who, though he was not formidable from his talents, had nevertheless done him much mischief. On the 16th of October, Francesco Piccinino, seeing that his troops continued to desert from him to the man who had been the constant rival of his family, and who was still the idol of the Italian soldiers, died of dropsy brought on by chagrin. He was succeeded in the chief command of the Milanese army by his brother Jacobo, who had certainly shown himself less destitute of talent, and less addicted to treachery. On his appointment to this post of honour, he received from the citizens the title of the "Thunderbolt of War."

Sforza continued to take measures well adapted to his new position. He forthwith concluded a treaty with the duke of Savoy, to whom he gave several places which he had taken in the territory of Alessandria and Novara. The cession of any of his conquests must have been galling to a man of his ambition; but on this occasion he thought it well to follow the proverb which says that a wise man should know to give up something at a proper time; and that when he has several enemies, it is expedient to make peace with one,

a truce with another, and a fight with all his might against the third.* About the same time he allowed the Venetian ambassador a free pass through his army when on his way to Milan; and on being remonstrated with for doing so, he replied that his enemies must defend themselves by fighting, and not by negotiation. But, doubtless, he had good reasons for his conduct. In the first place, as the stability of his position at Milan, should he ever succeed in getting possession of it, must depend much upon the good-will of his neighbours, he wished to avoid giving any unnecessary offence: and, in the next place, as he had reason to believe that the Milanese were already reduced to the extremity of famine, he wished the Venetians to be acquainted with their actual condition. Not long after this, the commandant of the fortress at Trezo, on the far side of the Adda, surrendered to him, and also delivered to him as captive Innocenzo Cotta, one of the Milanese commissioners, who had gone thither from the Venetian army to reconnoitre the pass. Lucius Cotta, the brother of the captive, happened at this time to be the commandant at San Columbano, a place which, as it was several times during the war taken and retaken, must have been of considerable importance, and Sforza sent word to him that, if he did not give him possession of that fortress, he would hang his brother outside the walls. Lucius's love for his brother was stronger than his patriotism, and the castle was duly given up. Thus the possession of the principal places in the Milanese,

* MACHIAVELLI, *Ist.* lib. vi.

with the exception of Monza—of the passes of the Adda, with the exception of Bivio, which might easily be defended, and of the principal towns on the Po and the Ticino—gave Sforza every facility for keeping asunder his enemies, starving the inhabitants of Milan, and procuring supplies from all quarters for his own army.

The new commander of the Milanese forces had soon an opportunity of measuring himself with the greatest captain of the day. It has already been stated that the latter had a considerable force in cantonments near Bivio, ready to take the field the instant the enemy should attempt to cross the river. The road from that place to Milan lay between two mountains, on each of which he had a small force stationed, sufficient at any time, as he thought, to keep the enemy in check, till he should be able to arrive with reinforcements. Information being brought to him late one evening that the Venetians were actually passing the river, he resolved to collect his forces, and repair thither without delay; and though the winter was now far advanced, and the Italian soldiers were little accustomed to face the inclemency of the seasons, yet, for his sake, they did not hesitate to encounter the hardships of a winter campaign in the immediate vicinity of the Alps. During the night-march to Bivio, he was rather alarmed on beholding the number of fires on the mountains which guarded the road to Milan, but he continued to hope that they had been lighted by the troops that had been stationed there by him. On his arrival there, however,

he found, to his great surprise and mortification, that his guards had been surprised and expelled thence by the Venetians, and that these mountains, by means of which he had hoped to prevent their junction with the Milanese, were in possession of his enemies. He also heard that Sigismund was about to pass the river with all his forces on the following day, with the intention of forming a junction with Piccinino.

Sforza saw that, should Sigismund's plan succeed, all his chances would be annihilated; and one with less resources, or less confidence in himself, would have abandoned his enterprise in despair, and endeavoured to make what terms he could for himself. But, desperate as his situation now appeared to be, he did not give in, for he well knew that, if he could only retard the junction of his enemies, the people of Milan must ere long be starved to death or surrender. His first step was to make a vigorous effort to drive the enemy from the mountains, and so repair the mischief that had already been done. Though he failed in doing this, he was able to confine them to the highest and most inaccessible positions, so that they could in no way co-operate with their fellow-soldiers, should they attempt to pass the river. For a few days both armies remained in this situation. Skirmishes continued to take place, to the great annoyance of the troops, who suffered much from the cold, and whom nothing but the prospect of instantaneous success on the one side, and the dread of losing everything on the other, could have induced to take the field. At last information was

received that Piccinino was advancing with a considerable army from Monza. As there were several routes by which he might ascend the mountains, and form a junction with the forces thereon, Sforza saw that his only chance was to meet him at a distance from the remainder of his enemies ; so, after a council of war, in which it was debated whether they should divide the army or not, he marched against him with the whole of his force. He did not, however, set out till after dark, and he artfully placed his sentries and their fires in such a manner that the enemy had no notion of his departure. Pushing on with celerity, he managed before daybreak to attack Piccinino, whose troops, confounded as they were by the suddenness of the onset, the dangers of which were as usual magnified by the darkness, made but a feeble resistance. The victors got possession of all their baggage and equipments, and pursued their foe to the very walls of Monza. They then retraced their steps to Bivio, where, in spite of the fatigues of the preceding night, they arrived at the close of the day. Thus within twenty-four hours had Sforza's troops marched over a distance of twenty-five miles, and gained a most important victory—such was the rapidity of his movements, and such was their readiness to undergo fatigue for a commander who had so often led them to victory.

As soon as Sigismund, the general of the Venetians, beheld that his enemies were not in their former position, he ascribed their departure to fear, and passed the

Adda with the whole of his army. Before advancing farther, he thought it advisable to make himself master of one or two strongholds in the vicinity of the mountains that were still held by the troops of his father-in-law. These, however, resisted his utmost efforts during the whole of the day, and in the evening he was confounded by the intelligence that Piccinino's army had been routed and dispersed, and that the enemy, whom he believed to be retiring before him, were coming, full of exultation after their victory, to their former position. Not daring to await the issue of a battle, he retired with the main body of his army behind the Adda, while those that originally occupied the mountains remained. Thus Sforza had completely succeeded in keeping asunder, for a time at least, the armies of his opponents. But the circumstance of the mountains being still held by the Venetians gave him much uneasiness, both because it rendered it necessary for him to keep a considerable body of troops to guard the pass of the river, and because they did much damage to the adjoining territory, most of which was the property of the Milanese nobles who had supported him. At last he managed to cut off their supplies by taking a small fort which commanded their communication with the river. On this, about a thousand of those who were stationed on the mountains surrendered unconditionally to him, and he, ever true to his policy of endeavouring to get himself a good name, set them free, and presented the servants of their captain with a ducat each. The remainder, amounting to

about three thousand, escaped by night over a bridge near Oliginato, which had only recently been constructed, and which they now broke down to protect their retreat. Having thus undisputed possession of these mountains, he constructed fortifications on them, from which a small body of men might completely guard the passage of the Adda.

The famine was now sore at Milan. The unfortunate people continued to send to Sigismund, entreating him to come to their relief; but he, baffled by the superior skill of his adversary, could do nothing. At last Bartolomeo Collio proposed to turn Sforza's position by a manœuvre somewhat similar to that by which Sforza had himself, ten years before, surprised Nicolo Piccinino on the banks of Lake Garda, and offered to conduct the army to a place adjoining the lake of Como, whither the inhabitants of the city of Como would send a fleet to transport them to the other side. Though it was now the middle of January, they hesitated not to expose the troops to the hardships of a campaign in the Alps. This bold movement was skilfully directed by the Venetian generals, and opposed with equal skill by Sforza. The great object of the latter was to prevent his enemies taking up any position on the lake whence they could embark, and in his endeavours to do this he was frequently engaged with them on the mountains between Bellagio and Bellona. In one of these skirmishes, a remarkable anecdote is told of him, which shows the almost magical effect of his presence both on his friends and his foes. He had happened for some days to be absent

from his army, and the enemy profited by the occasion to make an attack on his troops. The Sfortians were somewhat taken by surprise, and several of their castles were on the point of falling into the hands of the enemy. At this moment he himself, having had no knowledge of what had taken place, returned, and, beholding the critical position of affairs, he threw himself into the midst of the combat, and cried out with a loud voice, "Here am I!" The effect of these few words, pronounced in his well-known tone, was almost incredible. If we are to believe the accounts given to us by his secretary, Simoneta, and Corio, the Milanese historian, who wrote in the time of his son, the foremost ranks of the enemy threw down their arms and made obeisance, and many of them pressed forwards, eager to kiss the hand of the man whom they revered as the greatest ornament and honour to their profession. Be this as it may, it is certain that their rapid retreat, and the immediate rally of his own men, soon restored the battle. And there is very little doubt but that he would have prevented the Venetians embarking on the lake, if all his calculations had not been deranged by the unexpected revolt of some of the towns on the coast, and some of the owners of the fortresses whom he had looked on as his staunchest adherents. Profiting by this circumstance, the Venetian commander managed to embark his forces on the lake, and to bring them over to the mountains of Briganza. *

Another circumstance occurred about this time which

* SIMONETA, lib. 20. CORIO, part vi.

raised the drooping hopes of the Milanese. Sforza was informed that seven regiments of Piccinino's cavalry were anxious to join him on the first opportunity, and that they would most certainly do so, if he would send a body of his own horse to meet them on a certain day, when they were to be on their way to Como. He, nothing doubting, sent a large force to the appointed place, under the command of Salernitanus and Ventimiglia. Piccinino's cavalry duly appeared; but, either by accident or design, their commanding officer, who had expressed his wish to join Sforza, was not with them. When a commissioner went forward to summon them to fulfil their engagement, they said they knew not what he meant, and seized his person. The Sfortian cavalry, seeing what had happened, without awaiting the orders of their generals, galloped forward to attack those whom they had expected to join them. In their first encounter they were completely successful. But, unfortunately, they continued to follow their foe till they became entangled with the main body of Piccinino's army; and when they were disordered in the pursuit, and laden with spoil, they were in their turn attacked and defeated. The advantage gained in this casual encounter was represented by Piccinino and his friends as a complete victory gained in a general action, and was celebrated as such at Milan by illuminations and triumphal processions. And Piccinino, with a view of turning the impression so caused to the best possible advantage, had it signified to the inhabitants of the towns and the garrisons of the castles that he had completely routed

the enemy, and that their best course would be at once to surrender to him.

But the count was not the man to be daunted by such a slight disaster. All the places in the Milanese remained faithful to him; even the owners of the fortresses in the mountainous territory of Briganza, as they were chiefly Ghibellines, and opposed to the democratic party at Milan, were unmoved by the presence of the Venetian army. He himself lost no time in concentrating his forces in the plains adjoining the mountains, so as to attack the latter, should they attempt to proceed to Milan. But his situation was every day becoming more critical. He was placed between two hostile armies, each of which was equal, if not superior, to his in numbers. There was a great want of forage for his horses, and the men had been living on grapes, turnips, and chestnuts—poor fare for Italian soldiers engaged in a winter campaign at the foot of the Alps. Even of this diet it was reported, on the 28th of January 1450, that they had but a three days' supply.

Under these circumstances, Sforza determined to make another attempt against Monza, by the capture of which he hoped more effectually to cut off the supplies of the Milanese, and to interpose between the armies of his enemies. The conduct of this enterprise was intrusted to one Marliano, an officer of Charles Gonzaga's. He sent forward some of his captains to sound the disposition of the garrison, and to reconnoitre the defences of the town. The former were reported to be faithful to the Milanese, but it was said that the latter

might easily be taken by night from the side of the Lambro. An expedition set out on the evening of the 31st January, for the purpose of effecting an entrance into the town in the manner proposed; but by one of those so-called accidents, which seem to be brought about by the contrivance of false friends, and in which, in this case, there is much reason to suspect Charles Gonzaga, who must have seen the difficulties of Sforza's situation, they lost their way in the dark. When morning appeared, they found themselves seven miles from the city, which it had been their object to surprise during the night. After the failure and consequent discovery of this design, it was not deemed prudent to repeat it.

The contest between Sforza and the Milanese now seemed to depend on whether his troops or the citizens could endure hunger the longest. As murmurs had begun to be rife among the former, he deemed it prudent to call a council of war, more, perhaps, for the sake of soothing his officers by his eloquence than of profiting by their advice. All the generals who attended it were unanimous in their sentiments. They represented to him in the most forcible manner the dangers of their present situation, placed, as they were, between two hostile armies, and straitened for provisions, and strongly recommended him to fall back upon Lodi and Pavia: by so doing, they said, he would confirm the allegiance of the inhabitants of these two places, who might otherwise be induced by the present uncertain aspect of their fortunes to waver. If he were well

established there, he would get supplies for his own army; and as there was but little provision left in the country they proposed to evacuate, he might starve the Milanese as effectually as at present. Even if the Venetian army were to advance to form a junction with Piccinino, they would soon be compelled by want of food to retire, so that, if he were to follow their plan, he could not fail to bring the Milanese to terms which would be alike advantageous and honourable. But this advice, however prudent, did not suit him; and in reply to it he said, that it would be a pity to be disheartened by their present difficulties, when Milan was all but in their hands; that their retiring from their position would be ascribed to cowardice. He therefore strongly recommended them to remain where they were till Sigismund should advance towards Milan, when he promised them he would retire to the cities they had mentioned, if he did not see an opportunity of attacking them to advantage. He allowed that the Venetian army exceeded his in numbers; but for this, he said, they fully made up for in valour, and reminded them how often he had defeated Sigismund, Piccinino, and Collio. He concluded by telling them that he had made arrangements for getting supplies from Pavia, Lodi, and the other cities on the rivers.

Though all were heartily tired of this winter campaign, yet as nobody could do anything against the eloquence and the influence of their chief, they were compelled to give in to him; nevertheless he found it necessary to keep up their spirit by some show of active

operations. For this purpose he frequently drew them out in battle array near Monza, as if expecting an engagement. In the mean time he omitted no means which could conduce to his ultimate success. He repeated his injunctions to the officers and soldiers to be doubly careful that no provisions should be brought into Milan; and having heard that his subjects at Lodi and Pavia had been tempted by their high price to send them supplies, he forbade them doing so under penalty of death. He requested all his friends in these places to send him from their private stores what was requisite for his own army; and where his friendly entreaties were not complied with, he did not hesitate to avail himself of force. With a view of providing against any sudden attack of the Venetians, he had his own positions fortified in the most complete manner; and arrangements were made, by which, should anything occur, the different divisions of his army were to communicate by signal. Sigismund, so far from showing any disposition to attack him, seemed more desirous of securing the communications in his rear than of advancing to the assistance of the Milanese.

If we may judge by the conduct of the men of little faith, which is always a pretty sure index of the expectations of a party, suffering and privation had made both sides equally despondent. Jacobo Piccinino offered, on the condition of receiving Piacenza, with all the castles in the vicinity that had belonged to his father, to pass over to Sforza; while Ventimiglia, who had hitherto shown considerable attachment to the latter,

promised to give up the town of Canturio, in which he was then stationed, and to join the enemy. The former, however, moved either by remorse, or by the dread of putting himself in the power of the man he had so often betrayed, changed his mind; and when his friend Luchino, through whose agency the arrangements had been made, brought him letters from Sforza, he denounced him as a traitor, and had him hanged.* Ventimiglia was also prevented by the sagacity of his commander-in-chief from carrying his designs into execution. When the latter first received intimation of them, he was loth to believe it, but, after further intimation, went himself to Canturio with sufficient force to prevent it falling into the hands of the enemy. On his arrival there he had him brought into his presence, and frankly told him what he had heard. Ventimiglia attempted in vain to exculpate himself. Sforza found additional proofs of his intentions, and sent him to be incarcerated at Pavia.

The blockade of Milan had now continued for more than one year, with the exception of the short truce of twenty days, which had been rather detrimental to the inhabitants than otherwise. But their patient endurance, and the vicissitudes to which Sforza was exposed,

* I am bound to say that the meditated treachery of Piccinino rests entirely on the authority of Sforza's secretary, Simoneta, and of his copyist, Corio. M. Sismondi, in relating the transaction, refers to no authority except the former of these, and Muratori makes no mention of it in his annals of Italy. The fact of Piccinino having hung Luchino for bringing him letters from Sforza would probably not have been related, if it had not been notorious; but the first part of the story involving Piccinino may have been invented, or given on insufficient authority, by the panegyrist of his enemy.

had induced many even of those who most admired his talents to doubt of his ultimate success. Now, however, the fruits of his well-laid plans began to manifest themselves. The famine in the city was becoming too severe even for those who said that they would sooner die than submit. The poor, who had always been very numerous at Milan, and who, it is probable, at this time formed no small portion of the government party, were compelled to live on asses, horses, dogs, cats, rats, mice, and many other things so abhorrent to the nature of man, that, in the words of the annalist of Italy, they often gulped down the very death they sought to avoid. Indeed, their use of the above-mentioned animals had become so common that they were publicly sold in the principal square in the city, and the people frequently quarrelled among themselves in their anxiety to get them. Roots and vegetables were eagerly sought after, and devoured undressed. None, except the most wealthy, ever tasted wine.* Many of the aged and diseased expired in the streets. The lamentations of the wretched, the groans of the dying, and the howls of the despairing, were heard in all quarters. Many made their way out of the city, thinking it better to fall into the hands of men than to face such a calamity. Several betook themselves to the castles and threw themselves on the charity of the commandants, who were seldom so hard-hearted as to

* At present, this may seem no great sign of privation, but it was doubtless severely felt in a country where light wine was the general beverage of the people, and was probably deemed necessary to counteract the insalubrious effects of the water that was mixed with the Alpine snows.

refuse them admission or relief. But Sforza forbad any species of relief to be administered to them, and gave orders that, whenever it was possible, they should be driven back to the city. As all those who had found a temporary asylum in the neighbouring towns and castles were expelled, the whole country was soon filled with famishing wretches of all ages and sexes; many, who thought that, in the country, they might possibly lay their hands on vegetables or weeds, threw themselves into any place where they hoped to escape the observation of those who were ordered to drive them back into the city; neither matrons nor maids hesitated to make any sacrifice to preserve their lives.

To all remonstrances that were made to him, Sforza replied that he was merely acting according to the rules of war, and that the prevalent misery was to be ascribed not to him, but to the obstinacy of the Milanese. His then opponents, and subsequent calumniators, did not hesitate to avail themselves of the circumstance to injure his reputation and to blacken his memory. But in reviewing his conduct after a lapse of four centuries, it must be admitted that, though the effects of his measures came more immediately under his observation than often happens in such cases, the most humane commanders of the present age have not hesitated, when occasion required, to inflict the same amount of misery on the undeserving inhabitants. The sufferings of the Genoese in 1797, and of the Maltese in 1799, were probably equal to those of the Milanese in 1450; yet no one has laid them to the charge of either Lord

Keith or Lord Nelson. Perhaps, indeed, Sforza's conduct may have been in more strict accordance with the rules of justice than that of either of the English admirals, as it is probable that those he beheld suffering from famine had taken no inconsiderable part in excluding him from what he conceived to be his rights. The reflection that these commanders were only executing the orders of others, while he was carrying on the war on his own account, will only serve to transfer whatever blame may be attached to these transactions from their shoulders to those of the authors of the late wars. The repetition of such acts, indeed, may seem to call for an alteration in the rules of war, or may serve to convince mankind of its folly and iniquity; but surely it is unjust to blame an Italian condottiere of the fifteenth century, for conduct which has been followed by Englishmen whom we have honoured with titles, and whom history has dignified as heroes.

The Milanese authorities ceased not to solicit Sigismund to attack the enemy who caused such misery. But as he had been so unrelenting in his hostility to his father-in-law, and had, by the recent murder of his daughter, Polixena, both aggravated his displeasure and committed a crime which would justify any punishment, he dreaded nothing so much as falling into his hands; and he did not think his superiority in numbers sufficient to compensate for the greater skill and prestige of his opponent. For these reasons he declined to attack him, and told the Milanese messengers that the citizens had only to hold out a very short time till want

of supplies should compel their enemy to relinquish the blockade. The Venetians themselves were secretly in hopes that, in the extremity of despair, the populace would make the city over to them. However, as it was necessary to pretend to be doing something, Sigismund ordered a considerable quantity of provisions to be brought from Bergamos and the country around to the Adda, which he promised to forward to Milan. But Sforza thwarted all his designs: by withdrawing the garrisons from the fortresses, he brought together a sufficient force to show a bold front to any enemy who should appear, and to blockade the city more closely than ever. For he well knew that the crisis of his fate was now come, and that, if he could in any way maintain his ground against his enemy, he would soon be in possession of Milan; if not, he would soon be compelled, whether he now held the fortresses or not, to evacuate the country.

Within the city of Milan the famine began to produce its usual train of consequences. The citizens no longer gave vent to their grief in mere passive lamentations; tumults arose in various places, and the authority of the men in power began to wax weak. The magistrates, well aware of the state of feeling of the populace, took the greatest precautions that they should hold no assemblage, while they themselves met in the church of Santa Maria to devise means of appeasing them for the present, and providing for the future. As regards the latter, they could see no hope but in making over the city to the Venetians. But the sub-

ject of their consultation soon got wind, and two of the most independent of the citizens, by name Pietro Cotta and Cristofero Pagnano, went about sounding the wishes of the populace. By degrees a great crowd assembled outside the walls of the church. The government sent one of the most eloquent of their colleagues to persuade them to disperse; but, so far from prevailing with them, he had some difficulty in escaping out of their hands. They then tried to do by force what he had failed in accomplishing by eloquence, and sent another of their adherents in command of a body of cavalry, and carrying with him a number of halters, to let them see what they were to expect in case of disobedience. But a rebellion caused by hunger was not to be put down so easily; the appearance of the halters irritated instead of frightening the populace; and the troops that had been sent against them were driven back in confusion. They then began to sound the bells, and make other notes of preparation against an enemy. In the course of the night they made an attack on the palace, which was then occupied by the magistrates. After a repulse, in which Pietro Cotta, whose name has already been mentioned, was taken and thrown into prison, they again came together, and managed to gain admittance by a side entrance into that part of it which was inhabited by the widow of Filippo Maria. The guards, on seeing this, fled in dismay. The principal entrance was soon opened, so as to admit the body of the people. Leonardo Veniero, the Venetian ambassador, attempted to stay their course; and having made use of high-

sounding language, mingled with threats, he was seized by the leaders of the populace, and torn to pieces. The magistrates were then happy to be able to make their escape; and the populace, after they had got possession of the palace, set to to make themselves masters of the gates, at one of which alone they experienced resistance. Having thus completely revolutionised the city, they agreed to meet the following day in the church of Santa Maria, to consult about what was to be done.

Great was the concourse of people that came there at the appointed time. All professed their attachment to the republic; but experience had convinced them that they could not maintain their independence. They had then only to make a choice of rulers; and as they all agreed that they would not put themselves under the Venetians, they discussed the respective merits of the pope, the king of Naples, the duke of Savoy, and the king of France. Francesco Sforza was in the minds of all; but for some time no one dared to mention a name which had latterly become a byword of unpopularity. But among the people assembled in the church was one Gaspar Vicemercato, a man who was at all times distinguished for his courage, and who had been among the leaders of the insurrection of the preceding day; and having himself served under Sforza, he had probably learned that he was not so bad as he had been painted. On the present occasion, he displayed his wonted hardihood, by being the first to propose that they should call in the man whom they had been taught to hate like the

devil or the sultan. He backed his proposition by several very forcible arguments. In the first place, he represented to them that, torn as they were by faction, crippled for want of money, and almost expiring from famine, they must give up all attempts to preserve their liberty. Secondly, with respect to the princes whose merits they had discussed, the pontiff and the kings of Naples and France were all too far off to do anything for them in their present emergency; and the duke of Savoy was not strong enough to protect them. They must therefore make choice between Sforza and the Venetians. In such a case, they surely could not have any hesitation to call in the son-in-law and adopted child of their late duke, a man whom he knew to be so humane and merciful that he would be more likely to deport himself as the father than as the tyrant of the city.

This advice seemed based on sound reasoning, and possessed the additional recommendation of pointing out to many a hungry man the only method by which his necessities could be relieved before night. It was incredible with what alacrity it was adopted. All shouted out the name of the man whom, one day before, they had been taught to regard as their bitterest enemy; and it was forthwith decreed that Gaspar Vicemercato should proceed to inform him of the wishes of the people, and to request him to come to the city without any delay.

During the whole of the preceding day, Francesco Sforza was well aware of all that was going on in the

city. As before, he kept his men under arms, ready either to proceed to Milan, or to repel an attack of the Venetians. On the day following that on which the citizens had agreed to submit to him, he called a council of war, trusting as usual to his eloquence to make the measures which he had predetermined appear to be adopted in compliance with the advice of his officers. He then asked them to give their opinion, whether it would be better to attack the army of Sigismund, who would most likely be in some measure disheartened by the news of the recent occurrences, or to march to Milan, where their presence would not be without weight in the deliberations of the citizens. The majority of the captains were naturally more desirous of the booty that was always acquired after a victory, than of gaining any advantage, however great, for their general. At present, elated as they were by the recent turn which affairs had taken, and confident in their leader, they had little doubt of the result of a general engagement; whereas, if their presence should cause the Milanese to give in, their general would of course protect the properties of those whom he wished to make dutiful subjects. They, therefore, eagerly demanded to be led against the Venetians. But the considerations that in former times would have prompted Sforza to the same course did not now influence him; he felt that the die of his fortunes was now being cast at Milan; compared with its issue, the glory and the spoils of a victory were nothing. He managed to represent the posture of affairs to them in a manner so artful that they all gave

in to his opinion. It is probable that in this he was backed by a large number of exiled Milanese nobles, who looked to his success as the means of restoring them to their home and their position; and who, having sought security in the vicinity of his camp, might have been asked to assist in the deliberations of his officers. It is certain, at all events, that he was attended by a considerable number of this class the instant he set out for Milan.

He had not proceeded far when he was met by Gaspar Vicemercato, who formally announced to him the resolution of his countrymen. He was followed by a great concourse of citizens, who were anxious to curry favour with their new ruler, or to beg bread from the troops. Their number is said to have been so great that the fields adjoining the road for ten miles were swarming with men. The avidity with which they snapped at and swallowed whatever was given to them by the soldiers, showed how great had been their sufferings. In the conflict of their adulation, and their real joy, they cried out in the Latin language as they had heard it in church, "This is the day which the Lord made, and let us rejoice in it."

When he arrived at the Porta Nuova, by which, as it adjoined the quarter in which the insurrection in his favour had begun, it was arranged that he should enter, he found the gateway stopped by a species of barricade. An attempt was then made by some of the citizens to prescribe conditions to him. He, however, very coolly said, "If I had foreseen this, I should

have managed matters in a very different way." The significance of this hint was not lost; the republicans were in no condition to resist; and even if they had been, there were many who were more anxious for a good meal than for a constitution, and would not brook any delay. Gaspar also reminded them of the message which they had authorised him to deliver. The gateway was then cleared, and the new duke was admitted without further obstruction.

Perhaps history does not furnish us with any more remarkable instance of the fickleness of the lower orders, than the reception that was now given to Sforza. But a short time before this, the Milanese mob, having the upper hand in the city, forbad any one to mention his name except in opprobrious terms; now were heard the shouts of this very same people in honour of Duke Sforza. In the words of his secretary, who doubtless witnessed the scene, "men pressed upon one another, anxious to seize his hand, or in any way to touch him. So great was the throng, that for some little way his horse appeared to be carried on the shoulders of the citizens. All this time the dignity of his appearance was almost more than human; his countenance was both composed and cheerful, his words were seasoned with wonderful suavity. There was not less reverence than amity in their mode of receiving him, and he in his turn deported himself with a facility of manner and graciousness that was perfectly astonishing." * As he

* SIMONETA, lib. 21. A somewhat similar description is given by Mr Alison of the reception of the Allied sovereigns in Paris, in 1814: "The

was always peculiarly observant of all religious ordinances, and on this occasion was more than ever anxious to conciliate the good-will of the clergy, his first step was to go to the church of the Holy Virgin to return thanks for his fortune. This he was obliged to do on horseback, as the surrounding crowd was so great that he was unable to alight. He then proceeded to the house of one of his friends in the forum, where, after a slight refreshment, he began to take measures for setting his duchy in order.

His proceedings on this occasion were distinguished by his usual sagacity. Having placed a sufficient number of soldiers in the towers adjoining the gates, and in the senate house, he then ordered the citizens to lay down their arms; assuring them that they should be kindly treated, and that their properties should be protected. Provisions of all sorts were ordered to be brought into the city without any toll or tribute; both the Cremonese and the Pavians, whose situation gave them a great command of the produce of the surrounding country, were requested to lose no time in making good the deficiencies that had been caused by the blockade: three days after the capitulation of the city, no traces of famine remained. After all these matters had been arranged, he appointed Charles Gonzaga deputy governor of the city, and on the very day

people kissed their boots, their sabres, and the trappings of their horses; and many young women, of graceful exterior and polished manners, entreated the gentlemen to take them up before them on their horses, that they might obtain a nearer sight of their deliverers. Alexander's manner was so gracious, his figure so noble, his answers so felicitous, his pronunciation of the French so pure, as to excite universal admiration."

on which he had entered it he took his departure to Vimercato, in the vicinity of the headquarters of his army.

On his arrival there he learned that the Venetians, along with Piccinino, had retreated across the Adda, in spite of a futile attempt of one of his own generals to intercept them. Having thus fairly gained the upper hand in the field, he allowed his soldiers, exhausted by the hardships of a winter campaign, to go into cantonments. He then sent ambassadors to the potentates of the peninsula and to the neighbouring states of Europe, requesting them to acknowledge him as duke. In the mean time he took up his own headquarters at Monza, a place sufficiently near Milan to allow him to superintend the arrangement of affairs. Men of the utmost capacity and probity were selected to fill the chief offices of state. Two of the leading democrats, who, while their own party had the upper hand, had indulged in every species of violence and insult against the others, and who now trembled for their lives, were cast into prison; a few others were banished to Pavia or elsewhere, but the majority lost nothing by their change of rulers. Many both of those who had been his friends, and of those who wished to be so for the future, came to visit him at Monza; and there was scarcely a day on which he did not receive assurances of allegiance, or addresses of congratulation, not unfrequently drawn up in an adulatory strain. And when matters appeared to him to be sufficiently settled, he fixed the 10th April, the Feast of the Annunciation of the Holy

Virgin, as the day on which, accompanied by his wife and his child, he was to make his second entry into Milan.

Sforza's formal instalment in the dignity which he valued so highly, and for which he had so ably contended, was celebrated with a pomp well worthy of the occasion. From his present quarters he passed by a cross-road to the vicinity of the Ticinese gate, where he was joined by Bianca Maria and Galeazzo, who had shortly before attained his seventh year. They were followed by Alexander Sforza, with a great number of the captains who had fought under him, all of them mounted and equipped in the most magnificent manner. On the other side the leading citizens had come from Milan to meet them, bringing with them a triumphal car with a canopy over the seat, covered with white muslin and embroidered with gold, in which they wished their new duke to enter their city. But this he, out of policy or modesty, refused to do, saying that such dignities were fitted only for kings. Escorted by the nobles, and followed by his captains, he proceeded on horseback to the church of the Holy Virgin. Before passing the vestibule he was clothed with the white muslin garment worn by former dukes. He then entered the church along with his wife, where he was formally invested with the ducal dignity, in a speech composed for the occasion. After deputations of citizens, chosen from each quarter, had sworn allegiance to him, he was presented with the keys of the gates, along with the sceptre, crown, sword, and other insignia of his office.

When this ceremony was over, he made his eldest son count of Pavia, the title which he himself had held after he married the heiress of Visconti. Vicemercato, who had been the foremost in aiding his accession to his new honour, and the first to announce to him fortune, was raised to the dignity of count, and not long afterwards presented with the town of Valentia. A festival of five days was proclaimed, in which the new duke entertained the chief men of the city in a manner becoming his station. The time which was not occupied in these entertainments was passed in dances, plays of various descriptions, and tournaments. These last were held with the greatest spirit: rewards were given to those who acquitted themselves the best, and all seemed anxious to appear to the greatest advantage in the presence of the first general of the age. At the conclusion of the festivities, he created a new order of knighthood, with which he dėcorated one hundred and fifty of those whom he thought had most befriended him throughout. Thus the name of Francesco Sforza, from having been a by-word of reproach, became the most popular in the state.

He had at this time the additional gratification of being acknowledged by all the potentates of Italy, with the exception of the Venetians and the king of Naples. The Florentine ambassadors had already proceeded as far as Reggio, with directions to be guided by circumstances, when they received intelligence of the surrender of Milan. Great was the joy of their countrymen when this circumstance was reported to them; in place of the

Visconti, whom they had looked upon almost like hereditary enemies, they now beheld one who had shown himself their most constant friend; and in the present circumstances of Italy, they were not sorry to see him in a position to make head against the Venetians and the king of Naples. The ambassadors were ordered to proceed from Reggio to offer their congratulations, and, it need hardly be said, were received by the new duke with every mark of honour. And though the Emperor, Ferdinand III., had said that, after the death of the last of the Visconti, the duchy should revert to the Empire, and though the king of France claimed it for his nephew the duke of Orleans, neither of them made any attempt to enforce their pretensions by arms.

If the new duke of Milan, says M. Sismondi, could, at this very moment, when he had obtained the prize which had been the great object of his ambition, have foreseen the future destiny of the family whom he had raised to the throne, his joy would have been turned into sorrow. In the words of a Milanese historian of the sixteenth century, his crown was not destined to descend to a sixth heir; and the five successions through which it did pass were accompanied with many tragic events in his family. His son Galeazzo, as a punishment for his crimes and his lust, was killed by his attendants, in the presence of the people, in front of the altar, and in the midst of the celebration of sacred rites; after which, the whole city was deluged with the blood of the conspirators. Gian Galeazzo, who came afterwards, was poisoned by Ludovico the Moor, and was

the victim of the crimes of his uncle. He, in his turn, after having been made prisoner by the French, died of grief during his captivity. The fate of one of his children was like to his own; and the other, after having passed a long time in banishment and misery, re-established his children on his shattered throne, and afterwards saw the termination of both his family and his kingdom.

Such was the value of the prize for which Sforza had so long, so earnestly, it may be thought so unscrupulously striven; such, too, is the value of many things, for the attainment of which mortals still rise up early, go to bed late, and eat the bread of carefulness.

BOOK SIXTH.

FROM THE ACCESSION OF SFORZA TO THE PEACE OF LODI,
1450-1454.

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FROM THE ACCESSION OF SFORZA TO THE PEACE OF LODI, 1450–1454.

CHAPTER I.

REBUILDING OF THE FORTRESS AT MILAN.—WILLIAM OF MONTFERRAT LIBERATED—JOINS SFORZA'S ENEMIES—CHARLES GONZAGA LEAVES SFORZA'S SERVICE.—PLAGUE AT MILAN.—COALITION FORMED BY THE VENETIANS AGAINST SFORZA.—SFORZA IS JOINED BY THE FLORENTINES AND THE MARQUIS OF MANTUA.—VISIT OF THE EMPEROR FREDERIC III. TO ITALY—WHO IS CROWNED AT ROME, AND REFUSES TO ACKNOWLEDGE SFORZA.—RECOMMENCEMENT OF HOSTILITIES.—MANŒUVRES OF BOTH PARTIES.—SFORZA'S CHALLENGE, AND REPLY OF THE VENETIANS.—VENETIANS RETIRE WITHOUT FIGHTING.—INDECISIVE CAMPAIGN IN TUSCANY.—ARRANGEMENTS OF SFORZA WITH COSMO DE' MEDICI FOR CONTINUING THE WAR.—KING OF FRANCE PROMISES TO SEND RENÉ OF ANJOU TO THEIR ASSISTANCE.—CAMPAIGN IN LOMBARDY AND TUSCANY.—CONSPIRACY OF PORCARI AT ROME.

MACHIAVELLI, in that celebrated work entitled *The Prince*, says,* that the man who rises from being a subject to be a sovereign, must have either great good fortune or considerable talents, and that those who rise in virtue of the latter, find less difficulty in maintaining

* *Principe*, cap. vi., vii.

their position than those who have been aided by the former. As an example of the truth of his assertion, he refers to Francesco Sforza, who, he says, by lawful means and great talent, became Duke of Milan, and kept with little trouble that which he had acquired with great difficulty. The whole of Sforza's subsequent history will show that he possessed as much ability in governing as he had exhibited in diplomacy and war. And many of the deeds which he found it necessary to do in order to preserve his position, like those which he did to reach it, will show the sagacity of the historian whose remark has been quoted.

Neither the applause with which he had been received when he first entered the city, nor the pomp of the festivities which followed his coronation, lulled him into a dangerous feeling of security. Though desirous of winning the affections of his new subjects, he knew that it was at least as requisite for him to be feared as to be loved,* and that many of those who, when he had the power of conferring on them any benefit, were the loudest in their professions of devotion, would be the first to revolt from him in the hour of need. But in following out this policy he did not commit any act of unnecessary severity. Fortunately, there were no more direct heirs of the late duke whom it might be necessary for him to put out of the way. And having, as has already been mentioned, banished some of his most active opponents, and thrown into prison one who had committed many crimes in the name of liberty, he

* *Principe*, xvii.

endeavoured to treat the other citizens as if they had never been his enemies.

He lost no time in strengthening the fortifications of the gates, and rebuilding the citadel which had been demolished on the death of the last duke. But well knowing that this fortress was generally regarded as a badge of servitude, and that by its restoration he would cause many to suspect that he meditated acts of tyranny, and would make it evident to all how little he trusted them, he wished that it should appear that he was doing so at the instigation of the citizens themselves. For this reason he persuaded his partisans—who, it is probable, were at this time tolerably numerous—to suggest to the multitude how much the restoration and repairing of their strongholds would conduce both to the ornament and security of their city.*

Whatever might have been the general opinion as to his real intentions, all saw that it would be useless to oppose them; many even made a virtue of necessity, and pretended to be anxious for the restoration of the obnoxious edifices. One only of the citizens, Giorgio Piatto, an advocate of considerable celebrity, had the courage to raise his voice in opposing the wishes of their new ruler; but not daring to speak anything against

* Machiavelli, when discussing the policy of disarming the citizens of a conquered state, or building fortresses, says, "Quando tu gli disarmi tu incominci ad offendirli et monstrare che tu habbi in loro diffidenza o per viltà, o poca fede, e l'una e l'altra di queste opinioni concipe odio contro di te."—*Principe*, cap. 20. Sforza was evidently of the same opinion; but though, nevertheless, he built the fortress, he did his best to prevent the evil consequences referred to. Machiavelli, however, is of opinion that the building of this fortress contributed in no small degree to the ruin of his family. See *Principe*, cap. 20, and *Discorsi*, lib. ii. cap. 24.

him personally, he most artfully avoided the imputation of disloyalty by saying, that, if they could insure all their dukes being like Francesco Sforza, they would have nothing to fear, but they knew not by whom he might be succeeded or supplanted; and that if this fortress were ever in the hands of a tyrant or a foreigner, they had no idea to what oppression they might be subjected. He concluded by a sentimental appeal to the reigning duke, to trust more to the hearts and the affections of his subjects than to bulwarks of stone—a piece of advice which, however beautiful it may sound, has seldom been found practicable by those who have aspired to rule. The eloquence of the advocate was no match for the influence of the duke. At the expense of a thousand ducats a new castle was built, which, according to the historian of Milan, surpassed in strength and beauty anything that had previously been erected on level ground.*

Sforza, deeming himself now tolerably well established in his new position, bethought himself of one whom, a short time before, he had thought it necessary for his safety to cast into prison. He not only released William of Montferrat from his confinement at Pavia, but also put him in possession of Alessandria and the surrounding towns, which he had coveted so much. He, however, stipulated that he should pay him two thousand ducats annually, in lieu of the custom-dues which he had formerly received therefrom. This William promised to do, and signed a treaty to that effect at Lodi. But

* Corio, part vi.

he never forgave the indignity to which he had been subjected. When he found himself safe at Alessandria, he protested against the treaty, which, he said, he had only signed under the influence of fear, and took the earliest opportunity of joining the enemies of the new duke.

His example was, not long afterwards, followed by Charles Gonzaga. Sforza had, according to his stipulation, put him in possession of Tortona; he had also formed the most intimate alliance with his brother, Louis, the marquis of Mantua, and had even gone so far as to promise that his son and heir, Galeazzo, should marry Louis's daughter. But whether it was, as some strongly suspect, that the getting rid of Charles was one of those things which the hard necessity of the case and his recent succession compelled him to do,* or whether, as is said by Sforza's secretary and biographer, Simoneta, Charles had, out of jealousy of the favour shown to his brother, begun to intrigue with the Venetians, it is certain that, on the 7th of November, he cast him into prison at Binasco. In a few days, however, being moved by the intercession of Louis, he released him on the condition of his giving up Tortona. Charles, on finding himself at liberty, made his way by a circuitous

* Machiavelli says that a new prince must do many things for which they can only plead the same excuse that Dido did for her severity, when the captive Trojans were brought before her—

"Res dura et regni novitas me talia cogunt
Moliri et late fines custode tueri."

In the same place he says that every new prince must be reputed cruel. Few of that age, I think, would have been placed in Sforza's circumstances without having done more to deserve the imputation.

route to Venice, to be ready to join the enemies of the new duke when required.

Sforza was now neither at peace nor at war with the Venetians. Both parties alike feared one another. The duke of Milan dreaded the great power and boundless resources of the republic of St Mark, while they stood in awe of his military talents. Thus he was enjoying a cessation from the toils of war—the first he had known since his sixteenth year, when he made his appearance in the battle in which his father defeated Tartaglia, near Rome. But cares of a weightier nature now pressed upon him. A terrible pestilence, the result of the famine which had placed him on the ducal throne, broke out at Milan; and as this year had been fixed by the pope for a jubilee at Rome, the number of pilgrims who were passing through Lombardy, on their way to the holy city, rendered impossible that isolation by which the progress of disorders of this nature may be stayed. Thus it soon spread to Lodi and the other cities of the duchy, where the predisposing causes had not existed, and was carried thence to Rome. So severe was it at Milan, that two hundred occasionally died of it in one day; nor did it cease till it had carried off thirty thousand, or, according to some, as many as sixty thousand.* Piacenza is said to have been left

* Simoneta says thirty thousand; Muratori, sixty thousand: the smaller number appears the more credible. Nevertheless, it should be recollected that Muratori is generally tolerably accurate in his figures, and had no object in exaggeration; whereas the secretary of Sforza might be tempted to underrate the extent of the calamity, which, though he does not say so, was no doubt produced by the famine during the blockade of the preceding year.

almost without inhabitants. It continued, with more or less severity, till the end of the following year.

The peninsula, though desolated by this plague, was at least free from the horrors of war. Its potentates had been wearied and exhausted by preceding struggles; so that, though there could not be said to be a thorough understanding among them, there was at least peace in the land. This was in no small degree brought about by the mediation of Pope Nicholas V. That excellent pontiff was more given to learning and the fine arts than to war; and whenever he took part in the drama of Italian politics, he appeared in the character of a peacemaker. By his intervention Alphonso came to a definite peace with the Florentines, with whom, though he had not invaded their territory since he had been forced to raise the siege of Piombino, he had hitherto been nominally at war; and with the assistance of the marquis of Este, he persuaded the Venetians to join that monarch in signing a treaty with the Florentines at Ferrara. By the jubilee which he held in this year, he managed to replenish his coffers with money, which he employed in relieving the poor, in repairing and enlarging the churches, and in beautifying the city. Early in October, Borso of Este quietly succeeded to the marquisate of Ferrara, which had become vacant by the death of his brother Lionel, a prince who appears to have inherited all the good qualities of his father, though the shortness of his reign has assigned him a less prominent place in the history of Italy. The city of Genoa alone was ill at ease. In the month of July

the inhabitants deposed the reigning doge, and, after an ineffectual attempt to recall his predecessor, they elected his nephew in his room. But their commotions did not disturb the tranquillity of the neighbouring states.

This state of things, however, was not of long duration. The Venetians continued to regard in no friendly light the new duke of Milan; and they endeavoured to form a coalition against him of those who viewed him with jealousy, fear, or dislike. They were soon joined by the king of Naples, the duke of Savoy, and marquis of Montferrat, all of whom were actuated by some one of these motives, and who, though they dreaded his talents, entertained hopes that he was not sufficiently firm on his new throne to make head against their number. But he, though he wished for time to set his new duchy in order, and though he was fully aware of the almost inexhaustible resources of the Venetians, did not lose heart when he heard of their machinations. Misunderstandings had already arisen between the Venetians and the Florentines, and he found no difficulty in forming a counter-alliance with the latter, together with the Genoese and the marquis of Mantua. The above-mentioned misunderstandings were further fomented by a decree of the Venetians and the king of Naples, banishing from their dominions all the Florentines, with the exception of some few who were specially privileged to remain.

In this position of his affairs, Sforza was fortunate in being able to secure the assistance of one of the best condottieri of the times. Bartolomeo Collio, dis-

gusted at the preference shown to others, determined to leave the Venetians. Under pretence of his term of service having expired, and the non-payment of arrears, he asked their leave to retire. But they, seeing that they could get nothing more by him, and determined that the duke of Milan should not have the benefit of his services, resolved to act with him in somewhat the same manner as they had done with Carmagnola, and ordered Jacobo Piccinino to seize him and kill him. Piccinino managed to surprise and make prisoners of his troops, which consisted of fifteen hundred horse and four hundred foot, but he himself succeeded in making his escape to Mantua. Thence he repaired to Milan, where he was received by his old opponent with every demonstration of friendship. Sforza, to make good Collio's losses, assigned him the command of two thousand horse and five hundred foot, and promised him a larger stipend than he had ventured to ask. Thus, before the end of the year 1442, all parties were again ready for hostilities, and were only awaiting the commencement of the following spring to resume active operations.

In the course of the winter, the emperor Frederic III. made an expedition into Italy, for the purpose of receiving the imperial crown from the hands of the pope. As the Italians had long since ceased to be jealous of imperial influence, the greatest respect was shown to him wherever he went; even the Florentines, those ancient guardians of Italian liberties, honoured him with a magnificent reception. It was in vain,

however, that Sforza, who was peculiarly anxious to stand in the same relation with him as the Visconti had done with his predecessors, continually entreated him to come to Lombardy to receive the iron crown at Monza, and even sent his heir, Galeazzo Maria, to meet him at Ferrara. Either because he would not acknowledge the present duke, or because he feared that the plague was not extinct at Milan, he remained obdurate against all his solicitations. The pope, though he had the precaution to fill his fortresses with armed men, received him with all the respect that was due to the powers that be. When asked to crown him king of Lombardy, he requested a few days to consider, and afterwards, in spite of the remonstrances of the Milanese ambassadors, he consented to do so, merely reserving the rights of the archbishop of Milan. About the same time the emperor solemnised a marriage with a daughter of the king of Portugal, who was also a niece of Alphonso's. Three days afterwards, he, along with his new wife, received the imperial crown from the pope with all the customary ceremonies. Having made a sojourn of a month with his wife's uncle, he set forth on his return to his dominions.

On his way north he made a short halt at Ferrara. He was there met by ambassadors from the duke of Milan, and the governments of Florence and Venice, all of whom were anxious to secure his good offices, and was requested by them to arrange the differences which were just about to lead to hostilities. Whether he really tried to preserve the peace does not appear, but he cer-

tainly effected nothing. Borso of Este, the new marquis of Ferrara, seems to have succeeded more than any other prince of the time in gaining his good-will, having been by him created duke of Modena and Reggio. On the 10th of April the duke was installed in his new dignity. The great concourse of people, and incessant applause, both of the Ferrarese and the other subjects of the house of Este, which greeted him on the occasion, shows that he preserved all the popularity of his ancestors. On the 19th the emperor took his departure, and after a short halt at Venice, where the republic made wonderful efforts to receive him with due honour, he proceeded to Germany. Thus, though he did not take any open part in the war, nevertheless, by receiving the crown of Lombardy at Rome, and by visiting the king of Naples and the Venetians, while he declined to do the same honour to Sforza, he gave the enemies of the latter all the advantage of his name.

As he did not arrange a peace while at Ferrara, his departure thence was the signal for the recommencement of hostilities. On the very day on which he set forth, the Venetians beat their drums in token of a formal declaration of war. At the same time, the marquis of Montferrat, aided by his brother William and the duke of Savoy, made an attack on the Milanese dominions from the west; and Alphonso despatched his son Ferdinand with a force of eight thousand horse and four thousand foot into Tuscany.

The details of the campaign between Sforza and the Venetians, though they have been celebrated in a bom-

bastic strain by a Neapolitan writer,* are destitute of interest. Each party passed into the territory of the enemy, and remained there doing what mischief he could. The Venetians crossed the Oglio with a force of fifteen thousand horse and three thousand foot, took several strongholds—among others, Soncino—and laid waste the surrounding country. On the other hand, Sforza advanced from Cremona into the territory of Brescia, where he carried on operations of the same nature. After he had been joined by the marquis of Mantua, he took the important town of Ponte Vico. The Venetians then began to construct a bridge over the Adda, with a view of invading the Milanese. To hinder their operations in this quarter, Sforza despatched his brother Alexander, who was, however, surprised and defeated by one of the Venetian generals; and after he had lost nearly all his baggage, and eight hundred of his men had been taken prisoners, he escaped with difficulty to Lodi. But as the duke had ordered all the fruits of the earth and property of the inhabitants to be conveyed to the strongholds, the Venetians, though they overran the country almost to Milan, found nothing therein, and so far from enriching themselves with booty, they could scarcely maintain their soldiers. As Sforza's position in the Brescian territory enabled him to intercept the supplies that were sent to them from home, they were soon obliged to retire; and after various manœuvres and occasional skirmishes, they brought

* PORCELLI. His account of the campaign is published, *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, vol. xx.

all their forces behind the Oglio to free their dominions from the presence of the enemy.*

Meanwhile, William of Montferrat, with four thousand horse and two thousand foot, crossed the western frontier of the Milanese, and, having been for some time unopposed, began to threaten the city of Pavia. Sforza then sent a small force against him under the command of his brother Conrad, who gained a complete victory near Alessandria. For some time after this, William did not dare to reappear in the field, but, hearing of the defeat of Alexander Sforza, he took courage, and began carrying on intrigues with one Gian della Noce, a general of the duke's, who he hoped would join him with a sufficient force to enable him to resume active operations. The discovery of these intrigues, and the execution of Della Noce, obliged him again to keep quiet for a season.

For some time the Venetian and the Milanese armies continued manœuvring in the territory of Brescia in the presence of each other. Neither party, indeed, seemed to court a general engagement. The Venetian captains naturally dreaded the great military talents and almost unprecedented success of their opponent, while he, as, in the event of a disaster, he had not the means of reorganising an army, was reluctant to risk anything. The former availed themselves of this circumstance to increase their own reputation and to damage that of the duke:

* The result of Sforza's tactics on this occasion shows that he was not unreasonable in his recommendation of the plan which he proposed after the battle of Caravaggio.

they began taunting him and his officers with cowardice, and they gave it out through Italy that, though they constantly offered him battle, he declined it through fear. Sforza was too jealous of his fame, on which he felt that much of his fortune must rest, to allow these insinuations to pass by unnoticed, and he issued counter-statements, saying that the reluctance to fight was all on their part. At last, when the autumn was rapidly drawing to a close, both parties seemed to think that something should be done to save their reputation. Accordingly, the duke, after having satisfied himself that his numbers were not inferior to those of the enemy, and made choice of his ground, sent the Venetian generals a challenge, which, whatever might have been thought of it at the time, cannot but seem ridiculous to every modern reader. After having called God and man to witness their injustice and his innocence at the commencement of the contest, he made a most pathetic allusion to the miseries which the continuance of the war was entailing upon the whole of the peninsula, especially upon the unfortunate Brescians, who, as he said, were literally ground to atoms by the continual laying waste of their fields and bombardment of their towns. He then said that he really thought it was time that these evils should cease, and that he saw no other way of putting an end to them than their agreeing to meet in a certain spot and fight it out among themselves, a proposal which he did not think they would decline, after their having frequently given out that they were continually courting while he was avoiding an engagement, and having sent

him a letter, saying that they would soon give him reason to repent that he proceeded so far in their dominions. He therefore promised to meet them with all his forces in the plain of Monte Chiaro, four hours after sunrise, on any day that they would name; and, as a token of the sincerity of his intentions, he sent them a gauntlet stained with blood. "Thus," he concluded, "will the burning of houses, the smoking of towers, and the violence offered to matrons and virgins, stop; thus will cease the slaughter of men and the other horrors of war. It will be a fine thing, also, that such a multitude of brave men should meet in an open place to make a trial of their valour; and the result will show which of us, in the judgment of the Almighty, is acting most justly."*

This challenge, which was of course meant as a mere bravado to show off before the other powers of Italy, was accepted and replied to in somewhat similar terms. The Venetian generals, after all due protestations of bravery, said, that though it was for the challenged to name the place of meeting, they would nevertheless be ready for him in the plain he had named on the following Monday. As pledges of their faith, they sent him two gauntlets, and the same number of javelins dipped in blood. Thus, they said, as became the honour of the Venetian senate and the extent of its empire, they would persecute all tyrants, and continue to wage war with one who had so often effected his conquests with their arms, and made use of their money to get, first a wife, and afterwards a sovereignty, for himself.

* SIMONETA, lib. 22.

The purport of this answer spread rapidly through the Milanese camp, and the spirits of the soldiers, who had seldom remained so long in the field with so little advantage to themselves, were considerably elated thereby. Sforza, most likely expecting that his adversaries really meant to fight, made all the usual preparations for an engagement. From the directions that he issued, it would appear as if the only danger he dreaded was, lest his soldiers, after the first advantage they gained, should become disordered in their eagerness to enrich themselves with booty. He threatened the punishment of death to any one who left the ranks; he said that whoever should take a horse of the enemy's, and bring him within their lines, or even to a place whence they should be unable to get him back, was to be the owner of the horse; in like manner, if any one should seize one of the enemy by the crest of the helmet, or by the neck, and in any way detain him till his fellow-soldiers were unable to assist him, he was to have a right to the captive. Also, every person was to have a right to any one whom he had unhorsed, as well as to half the horse, should the animal be taken by another.

On the appointed day the Sfortian soldiers advanced in order to the plain of Monte Chiaro. A thick fog and a drizzling rain prevented their seeing the dispositions of the enemy. As they proceeded, a mighty shout, as if coming from a multitude of men, was heard from behind the brushwood, on the Venetian side of the plain, but no one appeared in the field. At first the duke of Milan suspected some ambush, to guard against

which he reserved a considerable body of men in the rear for the defence of his camp. But as the time passed away, and there were no signs of the enemy, he sent some of his light troops forward to see what had become of them; and they soon brought him back word that they were already at some little distance off in full retreat. He afterwards ascertained that the shout which he had heard in the morning had been raised by men placed behind the brushwood, for the purpose of impressing his soldiers with an idea of great numerical superiority; after which the Venetian generals, finding that the Milanese were not terrified thereby, had not the courage to measure themselves with Sforza.* The only one of the enemy found on the spot was the Nea-

* M. Sismondi says that the generals on both sides were equally desirous of avoiding an encounter, and that their armies, after having remained some time in one another's presence, retired to their respective quarters. It is impossible to admit the truth of this assertion, as even Porcelli, who composed his history for the sake of extolling Piccinino, allows that the duke of Milan was ready to give battle, but that his favourite hero was unable to persuade his troops to come up to the encounter. As he met Sforza while he was awaiting the enemy in the appointed place, his account of the transaction, which I subjoin, may be interesting. Piccinino is denominated Scipio, and Sforza is called Hannibal, throughout. "Scipio was expecting the arrival of the enemy, when, relying on the permission that I had got from Hannibal, I betook myself to him, that I might become acquainted with the disposition he had made of his troops. Here I saw the famous commander, by whose wisdom and military genius everything was being most diligently arranged. When he saw me in the middle of the army, he addressed me in the politest language possible, and expressed his confident expectation that I should write and abundantly testify before all the princes of the world the things that were now about to take place. The promise which I then gave I have kept as a writer of the truth." After mentioning the order in which the different bodies of troops had been arranged, he goes on to say—"A scout came up to him and said, 'The enemy is approaching.' Hannibal looked around all the plain like an eagle, and, on not seeing the enemy, said, 'Where is he?' To which he answered, 'They are not going to attack you in front, but through the slanting paths of the woods and the marshes.' Then turning his eyes to me, he said, 'I was aware that these fellows, whatever

politan poet, Porcelli, who had accompanied the opposite army throughout their campaign, and who now asked leave to visit the great captain of the age. The poet, in return for the courtesy with which he was received by the duke, promised to give him a good name in his book. Thus ended the day which was to have decided which was the bravest of captains of Italy, and which of the contending parties had most justice on his side. Both armies then retired to their cantonments for the winter.

The campaign in Tuscany was as barren of incident as that which has been described. Ferdinand, the son of Alphonso, having entered that territory with twelve thousand men, wasted most of the summer in taking a few places of minor importance. Having afterwards failed in an attempt against two small towns in the

they might say, would not really come; but let us go on as we have begun, lest anything be said against us.' Hereupon I said, 'You have before your eyes at the mound Scipio, with whom you can fight; he, for some time past, has been awaiting the enemy's forces, that he may begin the battle. Of this I wish you to be assured, Hannibal, that there is nothing of which Scipio is more desirous than this very day to make trial of the virtue of the generals and the courage of the soldiers.' Then, seeing that many illustrious men were watching him, he said, 'I am aware how desirous Scipio is of battle, and that he would most certainly fight, if the matter rested with him alone; but this I tell you, that the armies of the Venetians will not come to fight this day, and we do not wish to engage with merely a few.'" He then goes on to describe the increasing violence of the storm, the retreat of the main body of the Venetians, the desire of Piccinino to fight with the small body that still remained with him, and his being obliged finally to quit the field, in obedience to the wishes of others. On beholding this, Sforza proceeded to say, "'I am right—did I not say that the enemy would not come to this mound?' 'But,' said I, 'Scipio came.' 'Believe me,' said he, 'Scipio alone wished to fight; the others were lying hid in the woods and marshes. You know that in this I am speaking truth. Wherefore, I beg and entreat you, in virtue of your honour as an illustrious person, and your duty as a veracious historian, that you describe this matter exactly as it happened, for I know that all people and sovereigns will believe you.'"

valley of Chianta, he laid siege to Castellina. This place is described by Machiavelli* as being badly fortified by art, and still worse fortified by nature; but, weak as it was, the army which besieged it was still weaker, and after forty days it was obliged to depart. "So formidable were those armies, and so dangerous were those wars," says Machiavelli in irony, "that those fortresses which in these days are abandoned as being defenceless were then looked upon as impregnable, and held to the last." During all this time the Florentine army, under Sforza's two kinsmen, Sigismund Malatesta and Michael Attendolo, looked on, thinking that they could not do better than let their enemy waste his resources in a vain attempt to take places which, even if they were to fall into his hands, would profit him nothing. They had some little trouble in protecting their coast from the incursions that were made from the Neapolitan fleet, but ultimately they were able to prevent their continuance. After being obliged to raise the siege of Castellina, Ferdinand retired to winter quarters in the territories of his father.

During the winter the duke of Milan received two slight additions of strength. The Venetian general, Tiberto Brandolino, the same who had planned an attack on his camp at Caravaggio, passed over to his service; and Collio, whom he had stationed in West Lombardy to keep the marquis of Montferrat in check, was supported by the French general Rinaldo. He then retired to Cremona to spend the Christmas with his

* *Ist.* lib. vi.

wife and family, in whose society he seems to have had much pleasure, whenever he could spare time from the labours of politics and war. After a few days' repose he began to make preparations for the future.*

Skilful as Sforza undoubtedly was, both in politics and in war, it is allowed on all hands that he had at this time enough to do to make head against his enemies. The pecuniary resources of Venice, compared with those of any other state, may be said to have been inexhaustible. Recent events had reduced those of Milan to the very lowest ebb; and it is probable that Sforza's private fortune, which never had been large, had been rather diminished than augmented by his accession to the dignity of a duke. And he had now not only to make head against the Venetians on the east, but also to defend his western frontier against the duke of Savoy and the marquis of Montferrat, and to defend his Parmese dominions against an attack made upon them by two brothers of the family of Correggio.

In this emergency, Sforza had recourse to his old friend Cosmo de' Medici. The wealthy Florentine republic, of which he continued to be the chief ruler,

* I have not made mention in the text of a report given on the authority of a contemporary historian, Neri Capponi, that the Venetians made two attempts in the course of the year to assassinate Sforza. His account of the matter is as follows: "It is to be remarked that, during the course of the summer 1452, the duke was exposed to the following dangers. First of all, the Venetians endeavoured to have him assassinated in the fortress of Cremona, by ——— who was a prisoner there, and engaged to take from him the fortress and the city. He discovered the plot and punished the guilty. The Venetians promised ten thousand ducats to a certain person who promised to poison the duke, and gave him a certain drug which had been brought from the Levant, and which, if put into the fire, would cause the death of any one who was near, or even in the same room or chamber as

was at this time as much in want of troops to continue the war against the king of Naples, as the duke of Milan was in want of money to pay his large armies; the two friends agreed to administer to the necessities of each other, the former by a subsidy of eight thousand florins of gold, the latter by a body of two thousand troops, under the command of his brother Alexander. They also sent to demand help from the king of France, promising him that, if he would send Réné of Anjou to their assistance, they would allow him one hundred and twenty thousand florins for the maintenance of his army, and endeavour to reinstate him in the kingdom of Naples as soon as they could free themselves from the hostility of the Venetians. This, they said, they would soon be able to do, if he would comply with their request. It was finally arranged that Réné should enter the peninsula with a force of two thousand five hundred men.

While these negotiations were going on, the Venetians showed themselves determined to leave their adversaries no breathing-time. Regardless of the cold, they made an expedition into the dominions of the

the fire, as also of any one who touched it, or was daubed by it. The drug was given to him, the circumstance was revealed to him, an experiment of it was made, and, on its alleged qualities being discovered to be true, he rewarded the person who was engaged to do the deed, and kept the drug in his own possession." I do not believe that the story is mentioned by any other historian of that time. If it had been well founded, Simoneta, who would gladly have mentioned any circumstance which would have justified his master's hostility to the Venetians, would hardly have passed it over; nor would it have escaped the notice of one who was so well acquainted with all the mischief of the times as Machiavelli; Muratori, the compiler of the ponderous volumes containing all that has been written on Italian history, takes no notice of it in his annals.

marquis of Mantua during the month of January. The campaign, however, was as uninteresting in its details, and as undecisive in its results, as that of the preceding year. Sforza's means were so crippled that it was some time before he could take the field with an efficient force, and without him the marquis was unable to make head against his enemies. Hence, in the beginning of the year several of his fortresses fell into their hands. In the capture of one of these, (Manerbe,) which took place on the 15th April, the Venetian commander-in-chief, Gentile da Leonissa, was mortally wounded. The chief command of the Venetian armies then devolved on Jacobo Piccinino, whose partial successes in the preceding year had procured him the name of being the next best general in Italy to Francesco Sforza. But his conquests were now stayed by the appearance of the latter with a force vastly inferior to his own. Being attacked by him on the 17th of May, while engaged in the siege of Pontevica, a town between the Brescian and Mantuan territories, he retired the instant he recognised him among the opposite ranks.

The duke of Milan then marched against the Brescian fortresses. But his forces were not sufficient to effect their reduction ; and the marquis of Mantua, whom he frequently solicited to come to his assistance, was not only more anxious to recover the places he had lost at the beginning of the year, but he had now enough to do to defend his remaining possessions against his brother. For Charles, who had never ceased to covet his patri-

mony, had invaded his dominions from the side of Verona with a Venetian army of three thousand horse and five hundred foot, and at first carried all before him. After a short time, Tiberto Brandolino, who, as has already been mentioned, entered the service of Sforza during the preceding winter, came to the assistance of Louis. The latter, thus reinforced, lost no time in attacking his enemy. On the 15th of June a battle took place between the two brothers in a plain between the cities of Mantua and Goito; and after a protracted resistance of five hours, Charles was obliged to give way, leaving in the hands of the victors one thousand horse and several captains of divisions.

Louis did not fail to turn this victory to account; he retook several of his fortresses, and was proceeding to lay siege to Gedo, when Piccinino joined his forces with the remains of Charles's army, and prepared to attack him. But the news of Louis Gonzaga's victory near Goito had already made Sforza determine to evacuate the Brescian territory, and co-operate with his allies in the vicinity of Mantua. In pursuance of this plan, he had already advanced as far as Gottolenzo, when intelligence was brought to him that Piccinino was proceeding with forced marches upon Gedo. Sforza was well aware that the forces of the marquis were not sufficient to resist a combined attack of the garrison at Gedo and the army of Piccinino, and that his friends would most undoubtedly be defeated, if he was not there to compensate by his presence for their inferiority in

numbers. For this purpose he himself galloped off in the direction of that city, accompanied by a body of light cavalry, giving directions to his generals to bring the army after him with as little delay as possible. When he arrived at the scene of action, he found that his allies were already beginning to give way before the superior forces of his opponents. But he was destined on this occasion to afford another example of the wisdom of Machiavelli's observation, of how much the presence of a victorious general avails in deciding the fate of a battle. The news that Sforza himself was on the field, and that they would shortly be joined by the whole of his forces, spread like wildfire among the ranks of his allies, and passed from them to those of his opponent: the former were raised from the slough of despondency—the latter, from having expected a certain victory, began to tremble for the issue of the battle; and Piccinino, having so frequently had terrible experience of his inferiority to his antagonist, withdrew his forces from the engagement. As his line of retreat lay across a marsh, where his superiority in infantry could not fail to tell, Sforza did not deem it prudent to follow him with his wearied troops. But Piccinino, though he was thus protected, continued his retreat during the night, leaving Gedo to its fate.

Thus, by the middle of summer, Sforza and Louis Gonzaga had pretty nearly regained the ground they had lost at the early part of the spring. After this, occasional skirmishes, and sometimes even bloody encounters, took place, but neither party was able to effect

anything of importance: Piccinino was afraid to come to a regular engagement with his great opponent; and Sforza, not thinking himself sufficiently strong to attempt offensive operations, resolved to await the succour that had been promised him from France.

Nor was this year's campaign in Tuscany productive of any more decisive results. Alexander Sforza and Sigismund. Malatesta retook some minor fortresses, but were prevented, by jealousy on the point of precedency, from co-operating to effect anything of importance. Ferdinand, who still commanded the Neapolitan forces, did not dare to risk a general engagement, but took up a position in the mountains near Siena, whence, by ravaging the Florentine territory almost up to the walls of the city, he caused no small degree of panic among the inhabitants. His father made an attempt to gain a footing in Tuscany by means of one Gherardo Gambacorti, the signor of a castle in the Val di Bagno, a place which is situated in the mountains between the source of the Tiber and the Arno. By promising him a fief of equal value in the kingdom of Naples, Alphonso persuaded him to make over to him his dominions, which he looked upon almost as the key of the valley of the Arno. He was, however, prevented from carrying his project into execution by the loyalty of the inhabitants, who rose in masses and expelled the Neapolitan soldiers —an act by which they not improbably preserved the independence of Florence.

The pope, though he did not take any part in these wars, was not without his trouble at home. There was

at this time at Rome one Stefano Porcari, a man of no inconsiderable attainments, and of acknowledged ability and virtue. Like many other such persons, he was ambitious of signalising himself by some great deed; and for this purpose he resolved to make an attempt to rescue his country from the dominion of the priests, an undertaking in which his knowledge of their evil practices, and of the detestation in which they were held by the nobles and the people, made him hope for success. Like Rienzi in the preceding century, he indulged in many dreamy anticipations of being the second founder of Rome, and began to think that the beautiful verses of Petrarch,

> "Sovra il monte Tarpeio canzon vedrai
> Un Cavalier che l'Italia onora
> Pensoso più d' altrui che di se stesso,"

were written in prophetic anticipation of himself.

These thoughts had so completely engrossed Porcari that he was not able to contain himself; his words, his actions, and his mode of living, let everybody see what was passing in his mind. When his fame reached the ears of Nicolas, he had him banished to Bologna, and gave directions to the governor of that city to have an eye on him. But Porcari, nothing daunted, continued his intercourse with some kindred spirits at Rome, whom he managed to visit, making his journeys with such celerity that the governor of Bologna was not aware of his absence. At last it was arranged that all these lovers of liberty were to sup together at a certain house in Rome, where Stefano

Porcari was to join them. The supper was laid out, the would-be saviour of his country arrived in garments embroidered with gold, wearing a necklace and other ornaments which were thought to become his assumed character; speeches were made full of patriotic sentiments, and a plan was laid for seizing the palace of the pope, and calling on the people to resume their liberty. But their assembly was suddenly broken up by the arrival of the pope's soldiers; the patriots were all seized and brought to prison; and ten of the leading men among them, including Stefano Porcari himself, were hung outside the castle of St Angelo. Several of the people, supposed to have been privy to the plot, were afterwards put to death, with perhaps less trial than justice might seem to have required. Thus ended a conspiracy, concerning the promoters of which Machiavelli justly says that, "if their intentions were good, their judgment was bad; for though the conception of such enterprises may be attended with some little prestige of glory, the carrying them into operation is certain to be accompanied by evil."*

* *Ist.* lib. vi.

CHAPTER II.

CONSTANTINOPLE TAKEN BY THE TURKS—ITS EFFECTS IN ITALY.—VAIN EFFORTS OF THE POPE TO MAKE PEACE.—ARRIVAL OF RÉNÉ OF ANJOU IN ITALY.—HE JOINS SFORZA NEAR BRESCIA.—COUNCIL OF WAR.—SFORZA'S SPEECH.—DISPUTE BETWEEN FRENCH AND ITALIANS AT PONTEVISO.—RETREAT OF PICCININO.—BIANCA MARIA VISITS HER HUSBAND IN THE CAMP.—SFORZA FORCED BY THE SEVERITY OF THE WEATHER TO DESIST FROM ACTIVE OPERATIONS.—RÉNÉ RETIRES TO FRANCE.—ALL PARTIES TIRED OF THE WAR.—EXTRAVAGANCE OF THEIR MUTUAL DEMANDS.—PEACE OF LODI.—SFORZA COMPELS THE DUKE OF SAVOY AND THE MARQUIS OF MONTFERRAT TO RELINQUISH ALL THE TOWNS THAT HAD BELONGED TO FILIPPO MARIA.

THE belligerent powers were in the position described already, and the pope had safely quelled the sedition in his city, when they as well as he were astounded by the intelligence of an event, which seemed likely at no distant day to menace the common independence of the former, and the very existence of the religion of which the latter was the head. All Italy heard with dismay that the capital of the Eastern Empire had been taken by the Turks; that the Emperor Constantine, with forty thousand Christians, had been slain; that the churches had been profaned, and that the most abominable excesses had been committed by the unbelieving barbarians. The establishmeñt of the religion of Mohammed in the largest city in the known world, seemed in itself no inconsiderable blow to Christianity,

while the material interests of the Italians appeared likely to suffer by the loss of the Genoese colony of Pera, and the interruption of the Venetian commerce in the Levant. The peninsula of Greece seemed but a feeble barrier between their own shores and the barbarians. Men now began to think that it was no small reproach to the sovereigns of the peninsula, and of Christendom, that they had been so long striving among themselves, when they should have united against the common enemy. The pope wrote letters to this effect to the different rulers of Europe, and sent to Naples, to Milan, to Florence, and to Venice, requesting the respective governments to despatch ambassadors to Rome to negotiate a peace, and threatening excommunication to all who would not comply.

The different potentates had no objection that their delegates should go to Rome to talk of peace, but each was too much under the influence of self-interest to abate one jot or tittle of his own pretensions for the good of the community. As usual, they were not without the most specious excuses to justify their conduct. When the pope's message was delivered to Sforza, he replied to the legate that he was not waging war of his own accord, but was obliged to do it in self-defence against the Venetians; that his enemies were now attempting neither more nor less than to make the whole of Lombardy a province of their republic; that if it had not been for him, they would long since not only have done this, but have subjugated the whole of Italy, not even excepting the States of the Church. If,

therefore, the pontiff really wished for peace, let him send to the Venetians, who were the constant disturbers of tranquillity and breakers of treaties, and not to him, who only wished to be allowed to live quietly in his own dominions. If the places which they had taken were restored, and if Alphonso, who without a just cause or pretext had invaded the Florentine dominions, were to lay down his arms, he, for one, would be happy to forget all past differences, and to unite in a common confederation against the Turks.

When these things were known in the camp of the Venetians, a cessation of hostilities for four days was agreed on, to allow the wishes of the pope to be laid before the senate. But even this truce, brief as it was, was broken as soon as it suited one of the contending parties to do so. A considerable body of Sforza's troops had gone on a foraging excursion; the enemy, observing that they were unarmed, and at a long distance from their fellow-soldiers, sallied forth against them, and carried them off, along with their horses and their beasts of burden. The pope's ambassador remonstrated with them seriously on this breach of faith, and threatened them with excommunication if they did not restore all that they had taken. But they cared as little for the anathema of the pope as they had done for their own most solemn engagements; and Nicholas' ambassador, finding that all his pacific efforts were exerted to no purpose, returned to his master.

Sforza was with his army, awaiting the arrival of Réné, when Piccinino made another attempt against

him, which did but little honour to his integrity. It had been agreed between these two generals that the inhabitants of some of their towns should be allowed to go out into their fields without fear of annoyance from their enemy. The people of Castellio, trusting to this convention, were out in the country during the harvest-time, when they were suddenly attacked by a large body of Venetian troops; who, after having taken much booty and many prisoners, proceeded to lay siege to the city. The town itself was almost in a defenceless state, and the citizens, who had probably served too many masters to be particularly attached to any, were on the point of surrendering. The place was, however, saved to the duke of Milan by the intrepidity of one of his officers, by name Donatus. As soon as he heard what had happened, he made his way into the city, disguised in the uniform of the Venetians, and did his best to persuade the inhabitants to hold out till assistance should arrive. They, however, seemed little inclined to listen to him, and even threatened him with violence should he do anything to bring upon them the horrors of a siege. On this he made his escape into the citadel, whence he managed, by means of signals, to make his situation known to Sagramoro, another of Sforza's generals, who happened to be at hand. The circumstance of the wife and children of the latter being at Castellio made him doubly anxious to come to the rescue; and he managed on that very night to attack the camp of the besiegers, while they all lay in that false security which the certain expectation of victory

too often engenders. A fight followed in the dark, during which Venetian occasionally slew Venetian, and Sfortian slew Sfortian. It was not long, however, before victory, as it usually does on such occasions, declared itself in favour of the assailant; the Venetians all fled, or were taken prisoners, and Castellio was preserved to its former possessors. The captive officers, when remonstrated with on their treachery, defended themselves by the paltry quibble that they had made a truce with the inhabitants, and not with the walls of the city; and that, though they wished to take the latter, they meditated no injury to the former.

Agreeably to his engagement, Réné of Anjou had collected in Provence a force of two thousand four hundred men, with whom he had set out to the assistance of his allies. He was, however, for some time prevented from forming a junction with them by the duke of Savoy and the marquis of Montferrat, both of whom had, at the instigation of the Venetians, refused to allow his army to cross the Alps by the mountain-passes which they commanded. This, however, the Dauphin Louis, who was connected with the house of Savoy, and who seemed to cherish a sort of instinctive hatred towards the Venetians, undertook to arrange, and, by a combination of entreaties and threats, he induced the marquis and the duke to withdraw their opposition. Meanwhile Réné himself, impatient of the delay, had sailed with a small body of troops from Marseilles to Ventimiglia, a town some distance north of Genoa. Proceeding thence by Asti to Montferrat, he settled all

the differences between the marquis of that place and Sforza, and thus enabled the latter to bring four thousand men from the vicinity of Alessandria to his own headquarters near Brescia. Shortly after this the duke of Anjou was joined by his own troops, consisting of two thousand four hundred men, whom the duke of Savoy had allowed to cross over the Alps. Thus, by his friendly negotiation and his reinforcements, he increased the effective strength of his allies by six thousand four hundred soldiers.

Before proceeding to the headquarters of the war, Réné paid a visit to Bianca Maria at Milan. On his arrival there, he was so sumptuously entertained by her that neither he nor his soldiers—who, as the annalist of Italy remarks, appeared as fond of pleasures of all sorts, amusements, and feasting, as did their countrymen three centuries later—were in any hurry to leave it. It was in vain that Sforza sent to remind them that the season for taking vengeance on their enemies was passing away; they were unable to tear themselves from the delights of Milan, and they always found some excuse to stop on. At length, after a delay of fifteen days, Réné took his departure for Lodi, and proceeded thence to Pizzighettone, where Sforza sent a considerable detachment of troops, to receive him with the honours becoming a friend and a sovereign. After this, he lost no time in joining the duke of Milan in the Brescian territory, where he made a formal proclamation of war against the Venetians. As the arrival of Collio about the same time, with the force that had been employed against the

marquis of Montferrat, put them in a position to act on the offensive, it was deemed advisable to call a council of war to arrange their future plan of operation.

The speeches delivered by the two principal persons at this council—namely, the duke of Milan and the marquis of Mantua—are amusing, as illustrating the manner in which each endeavoured to convince others, as they possibly also might have persuaded themselves, that the measures which they most desired for the protection and enlargement of their own dominions were also most conducive to the general good. The marquis proposed that they should begin their operations by laying siege to Asola, a town on the confines of the territories of Brescia and Mantua, the capture of which, he had no doubt, would be followed by the surrender of all the places in the latter. Having done this, he thought they ought to pass on to the vicinity of Verona, where they would find all the inhabitants only watching their opportunity to throw off a yoke which they detested, and afterwards to make themselves masters of all towns between the last-named city and Vicenza, where they would find excellent winter quarters, and where he would undertake to provide them with abundant supplies. After these propositions had been variously discussed by Collio, Tiberto, and the other generals present, the duke of Milan delivered his opinion as follows. "If," said he, "it were now the beginning of summer, I should certainly approve of the suggestions of my friends; the advanced season, however, requires that we should act far otherwise. Before the setting

in of the winter, Cremona must be recovered, and all possibility of the enemy's crossing the Adda must be prevented. For it would be perfectly ridiculous in us to take up our winter quarters in the Veronese at a time that the enemy might be encamped around the walls of Milan. In addition to this, we must recollect that our allies, the French, cannot stand the cold as we can,* and must, at no distant time, be lodged in comfortable winter quarters. For this reason alone, even if there were no other, we must set about the operations which are nearest at hand. And I promise my friend, Louis Gonzaga, that, as soon as we shall have cleared the Cremonese, secured the passes of the Adda, and settled the French for the winter, I will bring my forces to co-operate with his in the manner he has proposed." The duke of Milan, as usual, carried the day.

It was about the middle of October, just three months and a half after the repulse of the Venetians at Gedo, that the Milanese and Mantuan army, strengthened in the manner already described, resumed active operations. Their career was one of almost uninterrupted success. Sforza had, however, no small difficulty in managing Réné's soldiers, who were chiefly natives of Picardy, and accustomed to a totally different species of warfare from that which had been practised by the civilised Italians. In their general conduct,

* To many this assertion of Sforza's may seem strange, as the majority of Réné's forces were natives of Picardy, the most northern province of France. It has, however, been ascertained by experience, that the inhabitants of northern climates do not stand severe cold better than those of the south. In the campaign of 1812, the Russians suffered from the cold fully as much as the French, whenever they were equally exposed.

they fully sustained their character of being more than men in the first onset, but more easily beaten than women, if firmly resisted. The first time they met the enemy, they had assigned to them a post of no very great importance, and received particular directions about their mode of fighting and plan of attack. But they had no idea of any discipline or obedience to commands: raising a loud shout, they rushed on without any semblance of order; but, fortunately for their allies, their rashness did not in any way affect the result of the battle. On a subsequent occasion, at the siege of Pontevico, they, as well as the Italians, incurred no small danger by rushing forward before a practicable breach had been effected, and by exposing themselves uncovered to the shower of stones that were thrown on them from within. Afterwards, when it was determined to storm the city, they solicited the commander-in-chief to be allowed to have all the danger and the glory to themselves; but, being repulsed on the first onset, nothing would persuade them to renew it. And when the place had been taken by the valour of their allies, they showed that they, indeed, deserved the name of barbarians. On finding that those who had first entered the city had also secured the best share of the booty for themselves, they vented their disappointment by putting to the sword not only the Venetian soldiers, but even the unoffending inhabitants, and spared neither age nor sex in their fury.*

* Muratori, who records the atrocities of the French soldiers on this occasion, says that in his time, (the middle of the eighteenth century,) they

The unfortunate citizens of Pontevico, who had little expected, and therefore made no preparation against, such unheard-of cruelties, implored the protection of those of their captors who were their countrymen. A pretty sharp contest arose between Sforza's French and Italian soldiers: the latter were determined to save the citizens, the former would not be balked of their prey; and it was not long before each party began to make use of their arms. The French, who could not long stand before the united force of the Italian soldiers and inhabitants, were obliged to fly, to escape the fate which they proposed to inflict upon others, and it required the utmost address of Sforza to prevent the whole body of his Transalpine allies from being sacrificed to the vengeance of his countrymen. The fury of the citizens, in the end, proved their ruin. Having in the first burst of their wrath set fire to some house, to which their would-be butchers had fled for safety, they were unable to prevent the flames from spreading, and Sforza, perceiving what had happened, and thinking that he might have some difficulty in preventing the place revolting to the Venetians, ordered his soldiers to allow the devouring element to take its course, and told the inhabitants to quit the city.

If the French auxiliaries of Réné were of little use

were very different in that respect. They appear, however, to have acquired the same character whenever they appeared south of the Alps, during the fifteenth century. It has already been mentioned that, in the year 1447, they roused the vengeance of the Alessandrians by giving no quarter to the fugitives; and Muratori gives them no better character in describing their actions in Italy in 1461 and 1495.

to Sforza in regular operations, they did him good service by the terror which they spread through the region around. The circumstances attending the capture and destruction of Pontevico were, as usual, exaggerated by report; and in the words of a contemporary writer,* "in all the towns subject to the Venetians, people were continually fancying that the French were at hand, and that their mothers, wives, sisters, and children, were about to be butchered before their eyes." Wherever he went, the towns seemed to contend with one another as to which should be the first to proffer their submission. The Venetian garrisons were seized on by the citizens, sometimes permitted to depart out of the town, and sometimes, even within sight of the army of Piccinino, sent as prisoners to the duke of Milan. So rapidly did these events take place, that within the eighth day after the fall of Pontevico nearly all the places in the Cremonese and Brescian territory were in the hands of the victors. The army of Piccinino in despair retired to Brescia; even then, though they were not pursued by an enemy, their retreat partook of the nature of a rout; each soldier seemed anxious that his person and his property should as soon as possible be protected by the walls of the city, and their march was in no small degree retarded by the confusion which such haste invariably begets. Finding on their arrival there that the inhabitants, being afraid to admit such a disorderly multitude within their walls, had shut their gates against them, they took up the most secure

* Simoneta, lib. xxiv.

position they could find between the city and the mountains.

Sforza, though annoyed at not being able to bring Piccinino to a general action, was now at least able to continue his operations without any fear of interruption. In a very short time all the plain between the Oglio and the Adda, with the exception of the cities of Bergamos, Crema, and one or two places of minor importance, surrendered to him. At two of them only (Roado and Orci) did he experience any resistance. In taking the first, he adopted the then rather novel expedient of firing, from his cannon, stones, which fell upon the heads of the unfortunate inhabitants—a practice which, though it has since been frequently adopted, is certainly unjustifiable on principle, and seems, as much as the system of starving a whole city or nation, to call for an alteration in the rules of war.* The capture of the last mentioned of these places caused him no small anxiety, and detained him a considerable time, during which, however, he was solaced by a visit from Bianca Maria. That lady's desire of seeing her husband was so great that the terrors of a winter campaign could not keep her from him; and after she had arrived in his camp, she preserved, amidst no small privations and hardships, as much serenity of mind as if she had been enjoying the luxuries of her capital. For the winter had already set in with unusual rigour, and the necessary hardships of the season were in no small degree aggravated by a tempest of such severity, that it tore up

* See *ante*, vol. ii. p. 178.

several trees by the roots, and overthrew the tents of the soldiers, including those of the duke of Milan. After the surrender of this place, Réné and his soldiers retired to winter quarters at Piacenza.

If Sforza could have continued the campaign in the manner that he himself wished, he would have proceeded to lay siege to Bergamos and Crema. He had already made some dispositions to do so, when the marquis of Mantua reminded him of the engagements he had made about marching into his territory after he had taken certain places on the Oglio and Adda ; and, being swayed either by honour or policy, he gave in to his wishes. Having placed garrisons in the captured towns—which, as he had lately been rejoined by his brother Alexander from Tuscany, he was able to do without much diminishing his effective force—and having sent Bianca Maria to Cremona, he proceeded along with his ally to Asola, the place to which the latter had proposed to lay siege immediately after they had been joined by the French. But the inclemency of the weather prevented their making any impression on that city. After a few days' exposure to no ordinary hardships, the duke and the marquis were glad to turn from the toils of war to the society of their wives, Bianca Maria and Barbara, who had come from their respective quarters to make acquaintance with each other in the camps of their husbands. They then agreed to retire to Mantua for the Christmas.

They had not been there three days when they were alarmed by the news that Réné was about to

retire, with the whole of his forces, to France. As his so doing would most likely prevent the completion of their successes, Sforza hastened to him, to endeavour to dissuade him from his intentions. The duke of Milan's eloquence was so powerful that Réné was unable to reply to it at the time, and requested to be allowed one day to consider. He then sent one Gian Coxa to tell Sforza that, much as it grieved him to do anything disagreeable to him, he was now come to an age at which he was fitter for the society of his family than for the camp; that he must therefore retire; but he promised to send his son John, who had assumed the title of duke of Calabria, to take his place. The soldiers, too, had been perhaps more exposed to the inclemency of the weather than they had expected; they were in no small degree piqued at the superiority of the Italians, and had ceased to feel friendly towards them since their quarrel at Pontevico. The Florentines were supposed not to be displeased at this step on the part of the duke of Anjou; they had already regained all that in the preceding year had been taken from them by Ferdinand; and though the duke of Milan was their friend and ally, they had no wish to see him undisputed master of Lombardy. Réné, after he had declared his intentions to Sforza, proceeded without delay to Asti, whence he crossed the Alps to Provence, without experiencing any opposition from the duke of Savoy.

The movements of Réné had wrought a change in the spirit of the contending parties, which the fear of

their infidel enemy had been unable to effect. Experience had shown Sforza that without his assistance he could effect nothing decisive against the Venetians, and they had suffered too severely at the end of the year not to avail themselves of a favourable moment for treating. Sforza, however, was anxious not to appear wanting in his engagements to the marquis of Mantua, and for this purpose he lost no time in rejoining his army, and making preparations for resuming the siege of Asola. But the soldiers, who from the first had murmured at being led thither in winter, said they could not continue to expose themselves to the extraordinary hardships of the season. An attack which he, unmindful of these circumstances, had planned against the city, was prevented by a heavy fall of snow. On this, Louis Gonzaga told Sforza that he was now satisfied that he had done all that he could for him; that, much as he desired possession of Asola, everything was now against him, and it would be folly to proceed. Sforza, on his part, said that the failure of the enterprise grieved him as much as if it had been undertaken entirely on his own account. He called God and man to witness that it had not miscarried through any want of zeal or exertion on his part; and though they were now obliged to abandon it, they need not despair of ultimately succeeding. After the two friends had remained some time together in private consultation, the troops were allowed to retire to cantonments: those of the duke took up their quarters at Cremona, Piacenza, and Parma; those of the marquis around his

own city of Mantua. Piccinino placed his army in winter quarters on the eastern side of the Lake of Garda and the Adige.

The belligerent powers gladly availed themselves of this respite to send ambassadors to Rome to arrange the terms of a peace, of which they had all become so desirous. As spring advanced, neither party showed any desire of recommencing the campaign. Sforza, indeed, took some precautions about securing the passes of the Adda, and the Mantuans and Venetians occasionally made pillaging incursions into each other's territories, but nothing in the shape of regular warfare was attempted.

The demands made by the ambassadors of each of the contending parties were so extravagant, that at first they seemed likely to preclude all hopes of an arrangement. The king of Naples required that the Florentines should indemnify him for the expenses of the war —a thing which they said he must do for them. The Venetians demanded that the count of Pavia—for they still refused to call Sforza by any other title—should not only restore all the places he had taken, but also give up Cremona; while his ambassadors insisted that he should have Bergamos, Brescia, and Crema, in addition to the territory he had possessed at the beginning of the war. To reconcile all their claims must have appeared difficult to anybody, and Sforza's secretary suspects that the pope was not in earnest in wishing for peace, thinking that he got better off while the different powers were venting their wrath upon one another,

than he might if they were to agree among themselves and to turn upon him. Nothing, however, is easier than to reconcile combatants who are alike exhausted by fighting; and that which the pope was unwilling or unable to effect at Rome was done by the mediation of an Augustine monk, by name Fra Simonetta da Camerino, in Lombardy.

The Venetians, seeing that the negotiations at Rome were likely to end in nothing, sent the above-named person to the duke of Milan, offering to give up all claim upon Cremona, if he would do so likewise with respect to Bergamo, Brescia, and Crema. The duke consented to give up the two first named of these cities, but still stipulated for the last. The Venetians were too desirous of peace to continue to haggle about one city, and too fearful of augmenting the power of their formidable rival not to make one effort to prevent its falling into his hands. For this reason they expressed their willingness to give it up, and said that, if he would send thither Bartolomeo Collio, they would surrender it to him. As they had for some time past been carrying on secret negotiations with this general, and had just arranged with him to leave the service of his former master for theirs, they were in hopes that, after he had got possession of Crema in Sforza's name, he would keep it for himself. Collio, however, boldly threw off all disguise; and on hearing of the state of the negotiations, he went at once to Venice, and advised them not only to keep Crema, but also to insist on much more favourable terms than they had at first pro-

posed. The loss of the services of Collio, and the report that Sigismund Malatesta, who had hitherto fought for the Florentines, was about to follow his example, together with a pretty clear intimation from the latter that they could not continue to fight any longer, induced Sforza to come to terms at once. For this purpose he met the monk Fra Simonetta, accompanied by one Paolo Barbo, who was authorised to sign a treaty on the part of the Venetians.

On the 9th of April the duke of Milan and the Venetian commissary met at Lodi, and took upon themselves to make the following terms for the rest of the Italian states. The former was to relinquish all the conquests he had made in the territory of Bergamos and Brescia, but was to be allowed to retain the tract of land commonly called the Gheradda. A free amnesty was to be granted to the inhabitants of all the cities that had revolted to him. All the places that the brothers Correggio had taken in the territory of Parma were to be restored to him, and those that they as well as the Venetians had acquired in the territory of Mantua, were to be given back to Louis Gonzaga. The latter was, in his turn, to reinstate his brother Charles in his lawful patrimony. There was also a secret article in the treaty, by which Sforza was allowed to recover, by persuasion or by force, the places formerly belonging to Philip that were now held by the duke of Savoy, the marquis of Montferrat, and his brother William. Alphonso was to evacuate the Florentine dominions, on condition of being allowed to retain the castle of Castiglione in

Brescia.* All the potentates of the peninsula were to be called upon to subscribe to the terms that had been agreed on by the two leading powers of Lombardy.

The marquis of Mantua and the brothers Correggio were, of course, constrained to abide by the settlement that had been made by their more powerful neighbours. Alphonso, however, had no idea that other people should make arrangements for him, and for a time he continued obstinately to reject them. But on hearing that the pope and the republic of Florence gave the treaty their most candid support, he thought it prudent to offer it no practical opposition; and though he did not actually sign it for some months afterwards, he recalled his forces from the Florentine dominions.

It now remained for Sforza to recover those places on his western frontier that had belonged to his father-in-law. To the marquis of Montferrat, who had come to terms with him in the preceding year, at a time that he was compassed by many enemies, it must have appeared hard to be asked to make further concessions; but he knew full well that powerful states, after they get all they want by war, leave their weaker allies; so, after having in vain solicited Réné, who had arranged the treaty of the preceding year, to intercede in his favour, he gave up all that was required from him. Nor had Sforza much more trouble in arranging matters with the duke of Savoy. In three days his generals, Tiberto,

* Neither Simoneta, Corio, Machiavelli, or Muratori, make any mention of this clause. M. Sismondi, however, relates it on the authority of Neri Capponi, who was doubtless well acquainted with all those parts of the treaty that related to his country.

Brandolino, and Roberto Sanseverino, took nearly all the castles on the east of the Sessia. The duke of Savoy, confounded by the suddenness of the attack and the rapidity of the success, sent ambassadors to Milan to complain of the injustice of requiring from him more than was arranged by the treaty he had made with Sforza, when he was fighting for the possession of Milan, and to say that, if he would abide by those terms, nothing would give him greater pleasure than to form the closest alliance with him. To cement their friendship, he proposed that his daughter should be betrothed to Galeazzo Maria. The duke of Milan, however, replied, that as he had broken the treaty alluded to by joining the Venetians against him, he must abide by the consequences; and that if all the places that had belonged to his father-in-law were not surrendered to him within eight days, he would deprive him of everything he possessed to the south of the Alps. Louis afterwards made many propositions for a compromise; but finding his antagonist quite inexorable, and being fully aware that, single-handed, he was no match for him, he gave in to the full extent of his demands. The duke of Milan then said that he would be happy to form an alliance with him; but as he had already promised that his eldest son should marry the daughter of the marquis of Mantua, he could only give his second son Philip to his daughter. Though this connection was then agreed upon, its preliminaries were never signed, and it appears afterwards to have been given up by the consent of both parties.

The duke of Milan, being determined to avail himself of the present opportunity to consolidate the dominions of his father-in-law, sent to Borso, duke of Reggio and Modena, summoning him to surrender two places on the Parmese frontier. Borso's territories were not so large that he could well spare any part of them, and he had on many occasions shown himself jealous of Sforza; but as open resistance was useless, he replied that he never could believe that Sforza could prefer the possession of two petty towns to keeping on good terms with him. He also sent to the other potentates of Italy to implore their protection. On finding that they would do nothing for him, he said that he was willing to give up anything that the duke of Milan required; but begged, as a favour to himself, that he might be allowed to retain the least important of the two places he had demanded; and Sforza, though he had a long list of alleged grievances to complain of, said that he was willing to grant him any favour to secure his good-will.

Thus ended the first war in which Francesco Sforza had been engaged since his accession to the duchy of Milan. Few, indeed, of the belligerent parties gained anything by it—certainly none of them had acquired any accession of territory that might not have been purchased for a much less sum than had been spent in the maintenance of their armies. But Sforza's position was in no small degree strengthened by the other powers treating with him as duke of Milan; and though his dominions might not be much enlarged by the clause in

the treaty which assigned to him all that belonged to his father-in-law at the time of his decease, it was of great importance to him that its words acknowledged him to be the legal successor of the Visconti. There is little doubt but that he must have been fully aware of this at the time that he showed himself comparatively indifferent about territorial acquisitions.

BOOK SEVENTH.

FROM THE PEACE OF LODI TO THE ACQUISITION OF GENOA BY FRANCESCO SFORZA, 1454–1464.

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CHAPTER I.

ALPHONSO SIGNS THE PEACE OF LODI.—ITALIAN ALLIANCE.—FRIENDSHIP OF ALPHONSO AND SFORZA.—DEATH OF POPE NICHOLAS.—JACOBO PICCININO ATTACKS THE SIENNESE—IS REDUCED TO THE GREATEST EXTREMITIES IN TUSCANY—ENTERS ALPHONSO'S SERVICE.—VIOLENT TEMPESTS, AND EARTHQUAKE.—ATTACK UPON THE GENOESE BY ALPHONSO.—PIETRO FREGOSO MAKES OVER THE CITY TO THE FRENCH.—JOHN OF ANJOU ARRIVES THERE.—PREPARATIONS OF ALPHONSO—HIS DEATH.—DISPUTED SUCCESSION TO THE KINGDOM OF NAPLES.—SFORZA SUPPORTS FERDINAND.—DEATH OF CALLIXTUS.—ELECTION OF ÆNEAS SILVIUS UNDER THE TITLE OF PIUS THE SECOND.—PICCININO INVADES THE TERRITORIES OF THE CHURCH—IS FORCED TO DESIST IN CONSEQUENCE OF A TIMELY ADMONITION FROM SFORZA.—FERDINAND CROWNED BY THE POPE.—CONGRESS OF MANTUA.—GALEAZZO MARIA SENT TO MEET POPE PIUS AT FLORENCE—HIS RECEPTION THERE.—PROCEEDINGS OF THE CONGRESS.

DURING three years of tranquillity that followed the peace of Lodi, Sforza acquired as much glory as he had done in times of war. The part which he had taken in arranging the negotiations to which all the powers of Italy consented, affords ample proof of the estimation in which he was held, and caused him from that time

to be looked up to as the pacificator and the arbiter of the peninsula. At the request of the pope and the Venetians, he sent ambassadors to Naples to endeavour to procure the formal adherence of Alphonso to the treaty. As that monarch had refused his assent to it, more out of pique at not having been previously consulted than from any positive objection to its conditions, it required merely time and tact to bring him over. By the persuasion of Sforza, he duly signed it on the 29th of January 1455; and at the same time he entered into an alliance for twenty-five years with the Florentines, the Venetians, and the duke of Milan, of which the principal object was to protect Italy against the Turks, and which was for some time afterwards the main-spring of Italian policy, and generally designated the Italian Alliance. But in becoming a party thereto, he reserved for himself the right of attacking the Genoese and Sigismund Malatesta — a condition which contained the seeds of the next Italian war.

From this time forward the king of Naples adopted towards the duke of Milan a line of conduct totally different from that which he had formerly pursued. As he had first become acquainted with him as the son of a powerful supporter of the Angevin party at Naples, and had afterwards regarded him as a clever adventurer, who might become a dangerous neighbour, if he were securely established either in or near his dominions, he had done his best to expel him from his fiefs in the kingdom of Naples, and to prevent him establishing a principality in the province of Ancona. And as

he, like many others, had coveted the inheritance of the Visconti, he could not be expected to be friendly to the pretensions of any rival, least of all to those of an intimate friend of Cosmo de' Medici, and constant ally of the Florentines. But now that he was well established as duke of Milan, and had been acknowledged as such by the principal powers of the peninsula, their relative situations seemed totally changed. Their dominions were too far apart to leave many points in dispute between them; and should any member of the house of Anjou try to enforce his claims to the kingdom of Naples, the duke of Milan would be the most powerful enemy or ally that either party could have. In short, Alphonso was now weighed by all the reasons which he had urged with so much effect upon Philip after the battle of Ponza; and these reasons were rendered doubly cogent by the talents and the influence of the person who now stood in Philip's place. The circumstance of John, the son of Réné, who had assumed the title of duke of Calabria, being now at Florence, showed him that no opportunity of making useful alliances was to be lost. For this reason he availed himself of every occasion of speaking of Sforza in terms of the highest approbation, and took care that the altered tone of his conversation should be made known as well to his ambassadors as to others who were likely to report it to himself. The duke of Milan, thinking that nothing would so much strengthen him in his new position as an intimate alliance with the most powerful and the highest in rank of the sovereigns of Italy, and recollecting that the

claims of the duke of Orleans to his dominions gave them a common interest in keeping the French out of Italy, showed every disposition to meet the overtures that were made to him from this quarter. To remove all causes of suspicion, he signified his willingness to forego his claims to the fiefs that had been held by himself and his father in the kingdom of Naples. Thus ere long did these two men, who had been for so many years opposed to one another, express their willingness to form the most intimate alliance. After the manner of princes, they deemed it necessary to cement, by matrimonial connections, the union which had been formed by a community of interests. Accordingly, Sforza betrothed his daughter Hippolyta to the king's grandson Alphonso, and the king promised his granddaughter, Isabella Leonora, to Sforza Maria, the third son of the duke of Milan.

Whether Pope Nicholas had been sincere or not in attempting to effect the pacification of Italy in the preceding year, he appears to have done his best to procure Alphonso's acquiescence to the treaty that had been settled by others at Lodi. He did not, however, long survive the attainment of the object which he professed to have so earnestly desired. For some time past he had been suffering from gout in the hands and feet, and towards the beginning of the present year his maladies began to assume a more formidable appearance. Feeling his end approach, he is said to have expressed, in the following words, a sentiment which doubtless has been felt by most good men who have

been called from a life of study to take a prominent part in the affairs of the world. "Never," said he, "do I see anybody cross the threshold of my door in whose word I can confide. I am so confounded by the tricks of those who surround me, that, if I did not fear the opinion of the world, I would give up the popedom, and once more become plain Thomas of Sarzano.* While I was in that condition, I had more happy moments in a single day than I have now in a whole year." He departed this life on the 24th of March 1455, leaving behind him a great reputation for acquirements in learning and taste in the fine arts, as also for the more Christian virtues of charity and disinterestedness. Nor had his liberal pursuits and amiable qualities of mind rendered him in any way unfit for governing with fortitude and prudence. He was succeeded by Alphonso Borgia, bishop of Valenciennes, under the title of Callixtus the Third.

Whatever benefits the peace might have brought to the sovereigns and the people of Italy, it was ruin to the men whose "country was war, and whose home was their armour." At the head of this class now was Jacobo Piccinino. After the peace of Lodi, he had remained in command of the Venetian armies, at a salary of one hundred thousand ducats, till the end of the year; but at the expiration of his term of service,

* M. Sismondi, in his zeal for everything done in the name of liberty, thinks that these words might have been occasioned by remorse at the crime of having put down, with a high hand, the conspiracy of Stefano Porcari. Had he taken the same part in public life as Machiavelli, whose opinions concerning that attempt have already been quoted, it is probable that he would have viewed it in the same light.

his employers, grudging the above sum in the time of peace, and disgusted with the disorderly behaviour of his soldiers, who were equally troublesome to friend and to foe, declined to re-engage him. Though full credit cannot be given to the exaggerated account of his deeds written by Porcelli—who, it may be recollected, visited Sforza's camp after the challenges that had passed between the two rival generals near Gedo—his partial successes in the late war had shown that he was not destitute of talent; and since Sforza had become a sovereign, he was looked upon as the first of the hireling condottieri of Italy. But he now began to act a part little better than that of a captain of the bands of the marauders who, during the preceding century, had infested the peninsula. In the words of Muratori, he lived at the expense of all who were not his subjects, and gained the affections of his soldiers by allowing them to commit with impunity robberies and crimes of all sorts. After he had been dismissed by the Venetians, he collected together a force of three thousand horse and one thousand foot, to resume the trade which had been begun by Guarnieri. At first he seemed likely to threaten Bologna, a place to which he might have laid some claim in right of his father, but he was prevented by the presence of the Milanese troops from making any attempt thereon. He then proceeded to the mountainous districts of Tuscany, and began laying waste the territory of the Siennese. As Alphonso owed this people a grudge on account of the resistance they had offered him in his preceding campaigns, and as the

poet Porcelli had managed to predispose him in a wonderful manner in favour of his hero, he is supposed by many to have secretly instigated Piccinino to this attempt.

Thus attacked, the Siennese sent to beg the protection of the powers of Italy. The pope sent Ventimiglia, (Sforza's former general,) and the duke of Milan sent his brother Conrad and Robert Sanseverino, with sufficient forces to defend them. Piccinino made a sudden attack upon his enemies in the Val d' Inferno before they were well united; but after a partial success, in which he made prisoner the pope's general, Ventimiglia, he was checked by the rapid concentration of his adversary's forces, and finally obliged to retire with loss. Unable to make head against all those that were now brought against him, he retired to Castiglione, where his supplies were cut off, and his army was wasted by pestilence and famine. In this extremity his forces must have either perished or surrendered, had not Alphonso, in direct violation of his former engagements, sent them a few ship-loads of biscuit from Naples. But these supplies were too scanty in themselves, and too irregular in their arrival, to afford sufficient support to a large army, and Piccinino, in the agony of distress, sent word to the Milanese ambassador that he would be willing to abide by whatever conditions his master prescribed. To this Sforza replied, that he would make no treaty whatever except in conjunction with the other allied powers of Italy. Alphonso then made another effort for his unfortunate

friend, and proposed that he should be made generalissimo of the forces of the Italian league against the Turks, at a salary of one hundred thousand ducats per annum. But this proposal was at once negatived by the influence of the duke of Milan, who scouted the idea of a wretched bandit (as he now called his old rival) being appointed to such a situation.

Piccinino remained in this situation till the following year, probably finding the difficulties of supporting his army in the mean time decrease in proportion to the diminution of its numbers. After this, the Siennese and the others, weary of keeping watch on him, requested the mediation of Alphonso, who arranged that he should quit their territory, and restore all the places he had taken, on receiving twenty thousand florins of gold. It is even said by a contemporary writer, that the Siennese as well as the pope agreed to pension him, on the condition of his not molesting them for the future. He then entered the service of the king of Naples, who allowed him to take up his quarters at Chieti, and allotted him to the pay of one thousand two hundred horse and six hundred foot.

After this affair of Piccinino's, the land had perfect peace for a year. The pontiff, indeed, tried to get up a crusade against the Turks, and might have done so, had not the news of their having been defeated near Belgrade by the Hungarians quieted the apprehensions they had formerly excited. But though the peninsula was not disturbed by the wickedness of man, it seemed to be the special object of the fury of the elements.

The appearance of a comet during the months of June and July made many think that some terrible calamity was at hand. As if in accordance with their expectations, the country shortly afterwards witnessed a hurricane which, if the descriptions are not greatly exaggerated, must have been one of the severest that Europe has ever seen. A mass of black clouds, issuing from the sea near Ancona, passed over the land between that city and Pisa, at a distance of about ten yards from the earth, and, when it came into contact with the Apennines, burst forth into thunders, lightnings, and whirlwinds of extraordinary severity. The thunder was so loud, and the lightning was so terrible, that many thought that the day of judgment had come. Neither buildings, trees, or living creatures were spared. Fragments of the roofs of private houses and churches were found at the distance of a mile from the buildings whence they had been taken; the stems of trees which had at first resisted the wind were broken across and carried far from their roots; even cars and mules, with their drivers, are said to have been carried from one place to another through the air.* It was most furious in the country between Florence and Sienna, which in the preceding year had suffered so much from Piccinino and his marauders. Fortunately, its devastations were confined principally to the rural districts; for if, says Machiavelli, it had entered a town, where houses and

* "Trasporto uomini e carre colle bestie da un luogo all altro per aria." —MURATORI, *Annali d' Italia.* "Un vetturale insieme col suoi mali fu disvosto dalla strada nelle vicini convalli trovato morto."—MACHIAVELLI, *Ist.*

human beings are crowded together, the amount of distraction and misery which it must have caused would have been almost beyond the power of man to conceive. And at the end of the year an earthquake took place in the south of Italy, which is said to have caused the death of one hundred thousand people, and the destruction of several churches, in the cities between Benevento and Naples.* If this number be not exaggerated, the loss of life must have been much greater than would have been caused by many years of such wars as were carried on in the fifteenth century. If, says the annalist of Italy, it be not impious in man to judge of the ways of the Almighty, it would almost seem as if the wrath of God had been poured out upon the unoffending people of Naples for the transgression of their king.

It is the opinion of some philosophers that war is the natural state of man, and that, though nations are frequently obliged to live in peace when their resources are exhausted, they will generally find something to quarrel about as soon as their means are recruited. Whether this proposition be universally true or not, its advocates might certainly appeal to the history of the different states of Italy in support of it. The wars which ended by placing Sforza on the throne at Milan were succeeded, if not by a regular peace, at least by a two years' cessation from hostilities. After this the different powers of Italy, though they really had nothing to fight about, as if by a sort of natural instinct were again in.

* Muratori, *Annali d' Italia.*

arms, which they seemed by an equally natural instinct to lay aside as soon as they had got tired of them. Two years and a half after the peace of Lodi they seemed to have had sufficient repose to allow their bellicose propensities again to break out. As regards Sforza himself, the wars that followed are remarkable as exhibiting him at the head of the party opposed to that of which he and his father had been the principal supporters, and putting him in possession of a city which had once been the principal entrepôt of the commerce of the Mediterranean, the Levant, and the Black Sea.

It has already been remarked that the clause of the Italian alliance, by which Alphonso reserved to himself the right of attacking Sigismund Malatesta and the Genoese, contained in itself the seeds of future hostilities. These seeds began to develop themselves about the end of the year 1457. Genoa, since the expulsion of the Milanese in 1436, had taken but little part in the general politics of Italy, but had, in the mean time, suffered much from the rivalries of two great parties, at the head of which were the Adorni and the Fregosi. The dissensions so caused had continued with various success for twenty years, and they now afforded Alphonso, who regarded the Genoese with all the hereditary dislike of his countrymen—which had been in no small degree increased by the part they had taken at the battle of Ponza—a specious excuse for interfering in their affairs. Under pretence of expelling the reigning doge, Pietro Fregoso, and of restoring the Adorni —who, it was suspected, had promised to make the city

over to him—he directed a simultaneous attack against it by sea and by land; and being desirous, at the same time, to take vengeance on Sigismund Malatesta for having commanded the armies of the Florentines employed in defence of their country, he ordered Jacobo Piccinino and the duke of Urbino to invade their dominions. This last expedition was not attended with any results worthy of notice; but the attack upon Genoa produced consequences of a more serious nature to his family than it had entered his head to conceive.

The doge, Pietro Fregoso, despairing of being able to keep the city against such a powerful assailant as Alphonso, determined to make it over to some one who would prevent it falling into the hands of his enemies, and who might possibly confer on him some favour in return. Accordingly, he transferred his own rights over Genoa to the king of France. That monarch hesitated not to accept his offer, and selected John, the son of Réné of Anjou, as being tolerably conversant with the ways of the Italians, to take possession of the city for him. At the same time, it must doubtless have occurred to him that the establishment of that prince in Italy would afford him or his countrymen no small facility in following up his claims on the kingdom of Naples. John of Anjou, on his arrival at Genoa in the middle of May, was immediately put in possession of the city and the fortress, and received by all classes with the greatest acclamations.

If the Genoese had hoped for peace under the impression that Alphonso would not dare to enter the

lists against so formidable a monarch as the king of France, they found themselves woefully mistaken. The difficulty of accomplishing his design seems only to have whetted his ambition, and imparted force to his energy. Determined to make a vigorous effort to get possession of the much-coveted city, he sent against it an expedition of twenty ships laden with all sorts of bellicose instruments, along with ten well-armed galleys, and gave directions that twenty more should follow them as soon as they could be got ready. At the same time the Adorni and the other exiles were collecting a considerable force, with which they were preparing to attack it by land. The Genoese, being animated by a hereditary dislike of the Aragonese, prepared to resist to the last; and John of Anjou, as well as Pietro Fregoso, took the most skilful measures for putting the city in a proper state of defence.

The blockade of Genoa had already commenced: the besieged were expecting, and had got themselves ready to resist, a combined assault by sea and by land—a terrible strife appeared to be at hand—when all parties were surprised by the news of the sudden death of Alphonso. That monarch expired on the 27th of June 1458, of a disease supposed to have been aggravated by the anxiety of the moment. After having detailed the part he played on the drama of Italian politics, it would be useless to say anything in praise of his genius, or in condemnation of his ambition. If the accounts given of his private life and of the internal administration of his kingdom be true, he is to be blamed for

immoderate debauchery, and for grinding his subjects by taxes and imposts of every description. His removal from the world was the signal for the dispersion of all the forces assembled at Genoa: the marines retired to their respective homes at Naples or Barcelona; and the land forces, which had been composed principally of exiles, did not tarry after their departure. The two heads of the family of the Adorni are said to have died of vexation at seeing all their hopes blighted by the untimely death of their ally. The Genoese, though freed from the immediate danger of an assault, suffered in no small degree from an epidemic, supposed to have been caused by privation and excessive labour undergone in preparing for their defence.

Up to the present moment Sforza had remained a passive though not an unobservant spectator of what was going on so close to his own dominions. But now matters had come to a state in which he could not possibly remain inactive. Alphonso having left no legitimate children, his hereditary dominions passed by the law of succession established therein to his brother, the king of Navarre; but as he had acquired the kingdom of Naples in no small degree by his own talents and bravery, he had thought himself at liberty to bequeath it to whom he pleased, and he persuaded the parliament of Naples to accept his natural son, Ferdinand, as his successor. Though such successions were not uncommon in Italy, Ferdinand's illegitimacy afforded a fair pretext to other parties to urge their claims, more especially as he had not the talents nor the resources of

his father. The hopes of the Angevin party at Naples had been in no small degree revived by the promises which Sforza himself had made to Réné, when that monarch crossed the Alps to his assistance; and now that Alphonso was dead, and that the heir of the house of Anjou was established at Genoa, they thought themselves sufficiently strong to dispute the succession; besides which, the new pope was determined to assert at least the claims which his predecessors had always made to the kingdoms of Apulia, and Calabria. He even went so far as to send his envoys to the different cities and great men in the kingdom, requesting them to return to the allegiance of the Holy See, and threatening them with ecclesiastical censures in the event of their refusal; and well knowing that he could do nothing without Sforza, he sent a special ambassador to him, requesting his assistance, and promising him, in return, not only his paternal fiefs, which had been taken from him by Alphonso, but even a considerable portion of the kingdom of Naples.

The son of the peasant of Cotignola had now risen so high, that not only did the destiny of the fairest provinces of the peninsula seem to hang on his decision, but a way was opened to him by which he might make a considerable addition to his dominions, and possibly hope to unite in his own person the sovereignty of the two finest states in Italy. Had he been twenty years younger, or had he been so long in possession of the duchy of Milan as to be relieved from all apprehension about the undisputed succession of his son, it is possible

that he would not have had the wisdom or the desire to refuse the offers of Callixtus. But he had now come to an age when most men are aware how much better it is to make sure of what they have, than to run the risk of losing everything in their insatiable desire for more. He therefore turned a deaf ear to the solicitations of the pope; and, for the reasons that had induced him to form a strict alliance with Alphonso of Aragon, he was now determined to give a most vigorous support to his son. For this purpose he sent two of his most intimate friends to the chief men and citizens of the kingdom, with authority to make his intentions known among them, adding that he was ready to risk his dominions, and his very life, in support of him whose part he had espoused. By this timely declaration he so strengthened the timid, and confirmed the wavering, that for a time all the former subjects of Alphonso seemed ready to offer their allegiance to his son. Only a few of the principal nobles, who had, perhaps, even before affected a species of independence, openly declared their preference for his rival.

At the time that the new duke of Milan was thus endeavouring to secure the succession of Naples for his friend, he took upon himself to administer a species of rebuke to the pontiff for his interference. After upbraiding him with the injustice of his attempt, and requesting him not to meddle any further in the matter, he warned him of the amount of danger and difficulty in which he must involve himself should he persevere. He reminded him that, even if Ferdinand were unsup-

ported, he had no means of making head against such a powerful monarch. Much less could he do so against the united arms of all Italy, who, at the request of his excellent predecessor, Nicholas V., had bound themselves to maintain the existing order of things. If the others were to fall short of their engagements, he himself would fight to the last in support of Ferdinand. Even if he had never been a party to the league of Italy, regard to his father, and the iniquity of the attempt that was now made to set him aside, would have induced him to do so. The refusal of Sforza to co-operate in the ambitious designs of the pontiff is said to have been the cause of the fever which not long afterwards carried off the latter.

Callixtus was succeeded by Eneas Silvius, under the title of Pius the Second. He was a man of great learning, eloquence, and ability; and, from having been constantly employed in public life, had acquired no small knowledge of mankind. The mention of a few of the leading circumstances of his former career will show his dexterity and tact. At the council of Basle, he had so distinguished himself by his opposition to the court of Rome that the anti-pope appointed him his secretary. Having been sent by the Emperor on diplomatic business to the court of Rome, he managed to reconcile himself with Eugenius, and received from him the appointment that he had held under his opponents. He was afterwards made bishop of Trieste by the same pontiff. By his successor he was elevated to the See of Sienna, the place of his education, and he received

the dignity of a cardinal's hat from Callixtus. He now ended by occupying the seat of those whom he had once declared to be heretical.

Whatever might have been Pius's wishes with regard to the kingdom of Naples, he had not the means of asserting the claims that had been made by his predecessor. As Callixtus had devoted whatever he could lay hands on to the aggrandisement of his nephews, the pontifical treasury was quite empty at the accession of Pius. Besides this, he now beheld himself in danger of losing part of his dominions in consequence of the acts of his predecessor. It has already been mentioned that Jacobo Piccinino had been engaged by Alphonso and had been sent by him shortly before his death against Sigismund Malatesta. The claims which Callixtus made to the succession of the son of Alphonso had given him an excuse for attacking the dominions of the Church, of which he continued to avail himself even after Callixtus' death. In a very short time after his accession, Pius beheld himself stripped of three of the fairest cities of his patrimony, and was without the means of resisting the further encroachments of his aggressor. He was forced to cry out to the duke of Milan in his distress.

Sforza now beheld himself, for the third time since his accession, called upon to adjust the differences of his contemporaries. Indeed, his authority and his influence appear to have become so great that the simile with which one of England's greatest statesmen * illustrated

* Mr Canning—Speech on the Portuguese intervention.

her position in 1825 might almost have been applied to him. As king Æolus kept the winds in restraint, he was able to restrain the jarring powers in Italy, to moderate their animosity, and to soothe their anger. On more than one occasion, if it had not been for his interference, they would have spread havoc and desolation around. With Piccinino, whom he affected to regard as little better than a common brigand, he dealt in a very summary manner. He sent him a message, in which he began by suggesting to him that it would appear much better in him to give up at once, and as it were of his own accord, the cities that he had taken from the Holy See, than to be compelled to do so, as he certainly would be, in the event of his refusal. Let him bear in mind that the Italian allies were all of one mind in maintaining the integrity of the dominions of the Church, and that he, for one, would take care that their wishes on this head were carried out. Let him take warning from what had occurred two years before, when he invaded the territory of Sienna; and let him now do as he was told, lest a worse punishment should befall him. As even Ferdinand, who of course would not do anything displeasing to Sforza, showed Piccinino no countenance, he was forced to comply.

The duke of Milan requested Pius, in return for the protection he had afforded him, formally to invest Ferdinand with the kingdom of Naples. This he promised to do, merely stipulating for the restoration of Benevento and Terracina, which had been taken from his predecessors. At the same time Pius arranged a

marriage between his own nephew, Antonio Piccolimini, and Maria, the natural daughter of Ferdinand. When these things had been arranged, the cardinal Ursino was despatched to Naples to place the crown on the head of the son of Alphonso. Thus had the son of the peasant of Cotignola managed to have all things settled according to his wishes.

Though pope Pius was not without the ambition of his order, on this occasion he certainly showed more zeal for exciting Italy against the Turks than for extending his dominions. For this purpose he arranged that a congress should be held in Mantua, which all the leading powers of Christendom were invited to attend. He left Rome on his way thither on the 22d of January 1459, and, after making long halts at Perugia and Sienna, for which last place he had always shown the most patriotic affection, he arrived at Florence on the 25th of April. He was met there by Galeazzo Maria Sforza, then only fifteen years old, who had been sent thither with a long train of soldiers and of the nobles of the land, who were in many cases accompanied by their families, to kiss the feet of his holiness in the name of his father. The young man was received at Florence with all the respect due to the son of an illustrious prince; in the words of the annalist of Italy, the citizens spared no expense in getting up amusements and shows for his diversion, and made every profession of regard and attachment for his family. On the 9th of May, the pope, accompanied by the young prince, took his departure from that city. After having been

received with all due honours on the road, he arrived in Mantua about the end of the month, where he was met by deputies from the principal states in the peninsula and the Levant, as well as from the Emperor and the king of France.

Though Sforza, by sending his son to accompany Pius from Florence to Mantua, had given token of his friendship and support, yet the pontiff thought it necessary for the dignity of his congress that he should attend it in person—a circumstance which bears no small testimony to the eminence both of his position and his reputation. In obedience to the summons of the head of the Christian religion, the duke repaired promptly to Mantua. It is incredible, says a contemporary, with what honour he was received, as well by the holy pontiff and the college of cardinals as by the marquis of Mantua. When the assembled deputies were ready to attend to him, one Francesco Philelpho, a most consummate orator and poet, delivered a most weighty and eloquent speech in his name, in the presence of his holiness, the cardinals, the clergy, and ambassadors, from all the states, not only of Italy, but of Christendom.* After having duly praised the proposition of the pope, he promised that, as far as in him lay, he would assist him against the Infidels. Hippolyta Sforza also, the betrothed bride of the son of Ferdinand, is said to have complimented the pope in a Latin oration that would have done credit to the best scholar of the day.

Though the diet at Mantua had been opened with

* SIMONETA, lib. 26.

great pomp, and was numerously attended, and though various resolutions were unanimously passed, and magnificent promises were unhesitatingly made, it did not produce any practical result. The real cause of this appears to have been the peculiar circumstances of the Venetians. Their own situation, and their extensive colonies and commerce in the Levant, naturally made them more than any others desirous of really repressing the encroachments of the Turks; but for these very reasons they would be the first object of their attack in the event of a declaration of war, and they refused to expose themselves to this danger till they saw that others had assembled their forces, and were ready to fight in good earnest. And when this was proposed to them, all, as before, began to make excuses. Some, indeed, had taken measures for increasing their armies or strengthening their fleets; but these augmentations were generally destined for objects nearer home, in which they imagined themselves more immediately interested. Thus, at the end of the year 1459, the diet separated without having arranged anything for the defence of Christendom; and, in the mean time, events had occurred which claimed the attention of the different sovereigns of Italy.

CHAPTER II.

FERDINAND'S UNPOPULARITY WITH HIS OWN SUBJECTS—THEY MAKE OVERTURES TO JOHN OF ANJOU.—VAIN EFFORTS OF JOHN TO SECURE SFORZA'S ASSISTANCE.—PIETRO FREGOSO ATTACKS GENOA—FAILS.—PREPARATIONS OF JOHN OF ANJOU AGAINST NAPLES.—FREGOSO AGAIN ATTACKS GENOA—IS KILLED.—DEPARTURE OF THE DUKE OF ANJOU FOR NAPLES—HIS SUCCESSES.—FERDINAND APPEALS TO THE MEMBERS OF THE ITALIAN ALLIANCE.—ANSWER OF THE VENETIANS.—CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN COSMO DE' MEDICI AND SFORZA.—PICCININO ENTERS THE SERVICE OF THE ANGEVINS.—COMPLETE DEFEAT OF FERDINAND NEAR THE SARNO.—HEROISM OF QUEEN ISABELLA.—RETREAT OF ALEXANDER SFORZA AFTER THE BATTLE OF SAN FABIANO.—FERDINAND, HAVING RECEIVED FRESH SUPPLIES FROM SFORZA, REGAINS MUCH OF THE GROUND HE HAD LOST.

FERDINAND, though placed on the throne of his father by the support of Sforza, and crowned king of Naples by the pope, had never been popular with his subjects. Even the warmest partisans of the house of Aragon would have preferred for their monarch Don Carlos, the son of the king of Navarre, who, however, turned a deaf ear to the overtures that were made to him. It was not long before Ferdinand embroiled himself with Antonio Orsini, prince of Tarento, one of the most powerful barons of his kingdom. The cause of their quarrel was soon settled, but the resentment of the prince of Tarento continued, and he took care to have it intimated to John of Anjou, the governor of Genoa, and the titular duke of Calabria, that the

time had come for his reasserting the claims of his ancestors.

John of Anjou had not been free from troubles since his arrival at Genoa. He was frequently without money to satisfy his partisans, and was occasionally obliged to borrow from the duke of Milan; and the duke, though he did not refuse to aid him in his difficulty, and wished to keep up the appearance of being on good terms with him, was supposed to wish the French well out of Genoa. Moreover, the ex-doge, Pietro Fregoso, who had made over the city to him, being now discontented with his reward, was endeavouring to get up a party against him. But the hints which he had received from the rebellious Neapolitan barons cast all these troubles into the shade. His first step was to endeavour to gain, by the most liberal promises, the assistance of Sforza. After reminding him of the friendship which had subsisted between their families for two generations, the assistance that his father Réné had given to him only a few years previously, and the engagements they had then made, he went on to promise him the sovereignty of fiefs and provinces, in the event of his succeeding by his assistance. He then proceeded to say that as both his father and himself intended to live principally in France, they would be only sovereigns in name, while he himself would be the virtual ruler of the kingdom of Naples. He further proposed that his daughter, Hippolyta, who had been betrothed to a son of the present king of Naples, many years younger than herself, should be given to him. If

he would not actually support them, he hoped that he would at least remain neutral, and endeavour to persuade Pope Pius to do so likewise.

All John's arguments and promises were thrown away upon Sforza. He briefly replied that he wished to live on good terms with the son of the duke of Anjou, as well as with his other neighbours, but that he was bound to act up to the terms of the Italian alliance, which guaranteed the throne of Naples to Alphonso and his descendants; and that he, for one, would do his best to oppose any attempt that was made to infringe it. That as for the proposed marriage, it was quite sufficient for him to say that he had promised his daughter to the son of Ferdinand; that at the time of his making his engagements he was as well aware of the difference between their ages as he was then; that he therefore could not deem that any reason why he should break his word, and that he would sooner suffer death than be guilty of such gross prevarication and deceit.

In the mean time Ferdinand, having been duly informed of the negotiations between his insurgent subjects and the duke of Anjou, sought to retaliate on the latter by raising him up enemies at Genoa. He sent to counsel the ex-doge, Pietro Fregoso, who, as has already been mentioned, had become dissatisfied with John of Anjou, to make an effort to expel him from Genoa. To enable him to do this, he furnished him with money that he had managed to borrow in the cities of the duchy of Milan, and with troops who had served

under Tiberto Brandolino, a general who had formerly fought under, and was commonly thought to be much attached to, Sforza. What part Sforza himself had in advising or assisting Fregoso does not appear, but he was generally supposed to have been uneasy at the establishment at Genoa of the French, from whom alone he dreaded any rival claims to his duchy; and the fact that the money of his subjects, and the troops of his captain, were employed in the expedition, seemed in some degree to implicate him.*

Viewing the matter in this light, John of Anjou sent to remonstrate with the duke for allowing these things to take place, and to say that he must complain of his conduct to the king of France, who, he had no doubt, would speedily send a force sufficient to protect him. However much Sforza may have disliked this allusion to the king, he was quite unmoved thereby in his reply. He said that he was not bound by engagements to any party except the members of the Italian alliance, and that, as he was at peace with all the world, the right of entry into his dominions was open to everybody. He could not understand why any one should blame him, if the king of Naples had borrowed money from the bankers at Milan, or if

* M. Sismondi relates this occurrence as if there was no doubt of Sforza having had a hand in it. Muratori also strongly suspects the same; and in confirmation of his opinion, refers to the *Istoria Bresciana*, by Christoforo da Soldo, a contemporary writer. The words of the passage relative thereto are—"The duke of Milan wished to drive the duke of Calabria from Genoa, and sent Messer Tiberto, one of his own generals, with seven hundred cavalry and infantry." No other historian, that I am aware of, says that either Sforza or Tiberto took any direct part in this expedition.

Fregoso had raised troops in his dominions with Ferdinand's money. John of Anjou might do just the same if he wished. He cared not one jot for his threats of complaining to the king of France, nor would he be induced thereby in any way to alter his conduct. The king, if the truth were told him, would see at once that he had done nothing that was not fair and honourable.

The undertaking of Fregoso turned out a failure. On setting out, he was joined by Antonio Filippo Fiesco, a Genoese of high standing, who was peculiarly hostile to the French. Having crossed the Apennines without opposition, he encamped within two miles of the city. He was disappointed, however, at finding that the inhabitants made no demonstration in his favour; and as the duke of Anjou remained within the walls, he could do nothing against him, except endeavour to reduce the city by siege or blockade. At the same time it was reported to him that the French general, Rinaldo, was advancing upon him from Asti. An accident afterwards caused the dispersion of part of his army. Fiesco was killed in a dashing attempt to effect an entrance into the city; and as he had great possessions, and as his relations and friends were more anxious to look after the goodly heritages that might be coming to them than to reinstate the ex-doge in Genoa, they very soon quited his camp. Fregoso, not deeming it prudent to await an attack with his remaining forces, retired and took Chiavari, Sestri, and one or two other places of some importance on the coast. But after he had been compelled to relinquish these by the Genoese

fleet, he recrossed the Apennines into Lombardy. A victory which the same fleet not long afterwards gained at Noli, over one that had been sent against them by Ferdinand, emboldened the Angevin party at Genoa to take measures more decidedly offensive than before.

The support which Ferdinand had given to Fregoso made the Genoese, who never liked either the Aragonese or their monarchs, most bitterly hostile to him. After the affair at Noli, John called together the leading men of the city, laid before them his plans and pretensions to the crown of Naples, and requested their aid. He reminded them that he had originally come from France at their own entreaty, in order that he might save them from the great misfortune of being enslaved by Alphonso of Aragon. In return for this, he now asked their assistance in regaining the kingdom that had belonged to his family; but, ardently as he desired this, he would take no step towards the accomplishment of his wishes without their concurrence. Before they came to a decision, however, they should recollect the dangers with which they had been threatened both by Ferdinand and his father, and with which he had no doubt they would continue to be menaced as long as a member of the house of Aragon remained on the throne of Naples. Finally, let them reflect on the great advantage it would be to them if the ports of Gaeta and Naples, and the fertile provinces of Apulia and Calabria, were under the same government as themselves.

It did not require much to persuade the Genoese, in their present temper, to aid in an attempt to expel Fer-

dinand from Italy. After no long consultation, they promised the duke of Anjou their support; they resolved to place at his disposal their fleet, consisting of ten galleys and two transport-ships, and voted him a subsidy of sixty thousand ducats. He was further strengthened by a fleet of twelve galleys from his father, and by a considerable sum of money from the king of France.

Thus supported, the duke of Calabria was about to sail for the coast of Naples, when news came that Fregoso was making another expedition against him. The latter, in fact, had crossed the Apennines, and stationed himself at Provenza, within four miles of Genoa. As before, John resolved not to give him battle in the open country; but, trusting to the loyalty of the inhabitants, he had the fortifications well guarded, and remained within the city. Mean time, as had already been determined, the fleet sailed for the Neapolitan coast with a numerous force. The subtraction of such a number of men from the garrison emboldened Fregoso to make an attack, and he succeeded in getting over the walls by night, and opening one of the gates, so as to admit the main body of his army. There was, however, a second line of fortifications within the city, which had been originally built as a protection against the Saracens, and had been completed in the time of Frederic I. Thither the French and their adherents, as soon as they had recovered from the consternation caused by finding an enemy within their outer walls, retreated. At the same time, word was brought to Fregoso that the Adorni, who were more

influenced by their ancient dislike to him than by any other feelings, were coming by sea to the support of the French. On this he determined, before their arrival, to make one desperate effort to gain possession of the old city, in which he was in great hopes that he would be joined by several of his countrymen. But as they, contrary to his expectation, remained faithful to the French, he was driven back after his first attack with considerable loss. Not long after this, however, he rushed in, followed by only three of his attendants, and regardless of the consequences, through a gate of the old city which had been inadvertently left open. The gate was immediately closed on him. For a time he overcame all opposition, and galloped from one gate to another seeking for the means of egress. But all exit from the city had been cut off, and, as missiles continued to be showered on him, both by the soldiers and from the houses, he at last fell mortally wounded. He was taken up by his enemies speechless, and in a few hours afterwards departed this life.

His death was the signal for the retreat and dispersion of his army. From the circumstance of their having been within the old city, several prisoners were made, including Sigismund, the son of Tiberto Brandolino, and some of the leading citizens who had joined Fregoso. A few of the latter paid the penalties of traitors; but the majority of them were dismissed, on the condition of their promising never again to bear arms against the king of France. The son of Tiberto was thrown into prison, as it seemed contrary to the

law of nations that he should have joined in a war while his father was in the service of a sovereign who still professed himself neutral. And there is no record of the duke of Milan having made any remonstrance whatever on the subject.

The defeat and death of Fregoso set John at liberty to follow the armament that had already started to the Neapolitan coast. On his way thither he touched at Porto Pisano, where the Florentines, though bound by treaty to the son of Alphonso, received him with every demonstration of the friendship that had so long subsisted between their republic and his family. "For," says M. Sismondi, "it was not with them as with the duke of Milan—they were not able to keep all their feelings in subjection to their policy, and they were more influenced by the character of the individual combatants than by any considerations of arresting the progress of the French arms in Italy." After his arrival at Gaeta, his success was so rapid as to attract the serious attention of all the powers of the peninsula. Though Ventimiglia (now marquis of Crotona, the same whom Sforza, before the surrender of Milan, had cast into prison at Pavia) had already been arrested by Ferdinand for carrying on a correspondence with John of Anjou, several of the leading nobles soon flocked to the standard of the latter. Almost all Campania revolted to him. When he went into the Abruzzi, its inhabitants did the same. Thence he passed into Apulia, several of the principal cities of which submitted to him almost without resistance. While in that

province he was joined by Hercules of Este, whom his brother, the duke of Modena and Reggio, had sent to his assistance.

After an ineffectual attempt to recover his lost ground, Ferdinand sent to the parties who, four years before, had signed the Italian alliance, requesting them, in virtue of the arrangements entered into on that occasion, to assist him in driving a foreign enemy from his territories. His first appeals were made to the pope and the duke of Milan, by whose influence he had been placed in the kingdom bequeathed him by his father, and who had several times, during the course of the year, called the attention of the congress that still continued to sit at Mantua to the affairs of his kingdom. In reply, they still expressed their determination to stand by him; but as they naturally wished a part at least of the expense of supporting him to devolve upon others, they ordered him to apply to the rich republics of Venice and Florence.

These two states now viewed matters in a very different light from what they had done at the time they signed the Italian alliance. They were then exhausted by a long war, and glad to come to terms with a powerful rival; and the predecessor of Ferdinand, whatever might have been his faults, had talents to make himself feared, and address to acquire friends. But Ferdinand was neither talented nor popular, while his rival was both; and as the tide of fortune had now turned against him, few were willing to expose themselves to it merely for his sake. The Venetians, therefore, at once declined sup-

porting him, saying that, though they still adhered to the stipulations of the Italian alliance, his father had excluded his family from the benefit of it by the support he had given Piccinino in his marauding expedition against the Siennese. The Florentines, too, had their own reasons for refusing to assist him. It has already been mentioned, that John of Anjou had been received by them with all the affection due to the representative of a family by whose assistance their ancestors had been enabled to maintain their independence; the royal standard of the Lily was still endeared to them by many associations, and both Ferdinand and his father had given them much annoyance, and sought to do them much evil. Thus, so far from acceding to the demands of Ferdinand, they could not at first be prevailed upon to remain neuter; and, under the influence of their feelings, they voted a subsidy of eighty thousand florins to the duke of Anjou.

The leading man in Florence, Cosmo de' Medici, had lived long enough in the world, and was sufficiently well versed in its ways, to know that, in managing the affairs of states, men must not be ruled by their feelings. He therefore thought it prudent to consult Francesco Sforza, the most intimate of his friends, and the greatest of living generals and politicians, before allowing his countrymen to carry out the vote which they had so unanimously passed. For this reason he sent an ambassador to him, to state the resolution to which they had come, and to explain to him that the feelings of the people of Florence, which were always friendly towards

the French, had been raised to such a pitch of enthusiasm by the recent successes of John, that he did not think they could possibly be induced to act otherwise. He requested him, therefore, to weigh this circumstance well before deciding which part he would take. On the whole, he thought he could not do better than join him in expelling the Catalan pest, as he termed Ferdinand's party, from Italy. After alluding to the many injuries which they had both of them in times past received from Alphonso, and the connection of his father with the Angevin party, he left no arguments untried to convince him that his real interests would be best promoted by their success. Let him but reflect on the many fiefs that his father had held in the kingdom of Naples — all of these, and probably several others, would be his, if he would join them in placing John on the throne. Desirable as these possessions would be for any one, they were peculiarly so for him, who had such a numerous offspring to provide for: in short, they would enable him to establish a family connection which would make him the most powerful man in Italy. And let him not fear lest John should be so much irritated by the part he had already taken as to retract his offers: in fact, if he would but give him permission, he would undertake to arrange all differences between them; and he would manage matters so, that John himself would be the first to make overtures of reconciliation.*

When an astute politician like the duke of Milan has

* Simoneta, lib. 26.

once made up his mind how to act, he is seldom swerved from his determination by any representations of his friends. After he had attentively listened to the proposals of Cosmo's ambassador, and apparently given them all due consideration, he dictated a letter to him to the following purport. He was surprised and grieved to hear that the Florentine people, forgetful of the conditions to which a few years before they had subscribed, had determined on assisting the opponent of Ferdinand; but his astonishment and sorrow were still greater when he was told that Cosmo de' Medici and other wise men had done the same as the fickle and easily-excited multitude. They at least ought to have had the courage and the honesty to oppose the violation of the most solemn engagements. To these engagements, let others act as they might, he for one was determined to adhere. He must once more remind them that they were bound thereby not only not to oppose, but even to assist, the son of Alphonso. He therefore begged that Cosmo would exert his influence, which he well knew was paramount, to induce them to do so; or, if he could not carry this point, let him at least persuade them to remain neuter. With respect to their relations to the rival candidates, he of course recollected the ancient friendship of his father and himself with the house of Anjou, and the many causes of complaint which they both had against Alphonso; but he had been taken off, he might say, by the judgment of Providence, and the character and the circumstances of his son were essentially different.

Alphonso, indeed, had boundless resources, and could neither tolerate an equal nor keep faith with a friend. So great was his pride, that wherever he went he seemed almost to expect that the very buildings and trees should do him homage. It was, of course, impossible to enter into any agreement or form any alliance with him. But Ferdinand had no dominions out of Italy, and was without the power, even if he had the inclination, to do them injury. Let them beware, however, how they allowed the French to obtain any further footing in Italy. The great object of that nation was territorial aggrandisement at the expense of their neighbours: they were already in possession of Asti and Genoa; if, in addition to these, they were established in the kingdom of Naples, he for one would tremble for the independence of the peninsula. Their next object would be the conquest of Lombardy, after which they would be the virtual rulers of the country south of the Alps. He thought, however, he could answer for Ferdinand always acting as their common interests required; and though his fortunes seemed now at a low ebb, he had no doubt but that, with their joint assistance, they would be easily re-established in the following spring.*

Cosmo de' Medici and the other statesmen at Florence were influenced either by these arguments, or by their desire of pleasing the duke of Milan. It does not appear whether they ever tried to induce their countrymen to do anything to support Ferdinand, but

* Simoneta, lib. 26.

they persuaded the assembly to abrogate the vote which they had made of giving a subsidy to his opponent. Nevertheless, the wishes of the Florentines for the success of the Angevin party were so great, that many of the citizens are supposed to have made large contributions out of their private fortunes for its support.

The circumstance of Sforza having been able to change the policy of a great republic like Florence, is no small proof of the degree of power and authority he had attained. But what he was able to do with the great men by whom its councils were directed, he could not effect with one who was, for the time being, regarded as little better than a common marauder. It has already been mentioned that Piccinino had been obliged, sorely against his will, to restore several cities that he had taken in the Dominions of the Church. After this he invaded the territories of Sigismund Malatesta, against whom he had been previously despatched by Alphonso, under the hopes of enriching himself at his expense. These expectations, however, were frustrated by the conclusion of a peace between Malatesta and Ferdinand. Anger resulting from this disappointment, and the hopes of getting something for himself by joining the side that appeared to be winning, induced him to leave the service of the latter for that of his opponent. On hearing of his intentions, Sforza did his best to prevent his carrying them into execution, and he was able, by donations of money, to induce several of his soldiers to remain with Ferdinand. To Piccinino he also offered at once to give his daughter Drusiana in

marriage, and promised that he himself would immediately send him a present of money, and arrange with the pope and the king of Naples to put him in possession of some goodly fiefs, if he would but remain faithful to the latter. At first, indeed, he pretended to lend a willing ear to these offers, and requested Sforza to send a friend along with the money to Borso of Este. But this appears to have been merely a trick to gain time, for Borso detained the Milanese ambassador disputing about the most trifling particulars, till the intelligence arrived that Piccinino had gone over to the enemy.

The duke of Milan, on finding that his attempts at mediation were vain, requested the duke of Urbino and his brother Alexander, the possessor of Pesaro, to prevent Piccinino passing through their dominions into the Neapolitan provinces. To assist them in so doing, he sent his brother Borso with a force of two thousand horse; but either because they were unable to oppose him, or unwilling to make their own dominions the scene of war, Piccinino was allowed to pass through them unmolested. However, they lost no time in marching after him, with the whole of their forces, into the disputed territory of Naples; and at the same time Pius, as some think at the instigation of Francesco Sforza, sent two generals, Simoneta and Rinaldo Ursini, with several squadrons of cavalry, to act under the directions of Ferdinand.

The annalist of Italy makes mention of an attempt that was made about this time by one of the insurgent

barons, the duke of Sessa, to terminate the contest by the assassination of Ferdinand. He says that the latter, being desirous of effecting a reconciliation with him, agreed to meet him in a certain place, where he was set upon by the duke and two others, but that he was so well skilled in the use of his sword as to be able to keep them at bay till some of his own attendants came to his assistance.* Be this as it may, Ferdinand took the field as soon as he had been joined by the forces which had been sent by the pope; and such was the impression of his superiority, that many of the cities which in the preceding year had revolted to his rival now returned to their former allegiance. John himself did not dare to attack him, and retreated to a strong position in the mountains near the Sarno, a river that flows into the sea a little to the south of Naples. As Ferdinand was sufficiently strong to have blockaded his rival there, he might have starved him into a surrender—a course which his leading generals strongly advised him to take. But either because his youthful ardour was so great, or because, as is said by some, his soldiers refused to remain with him unless their arrears of pay were immediately discharged, he determined on attacking. His men, having gained some advantages in the first outset, were allured into the mountain passes, where his cavalry, which constituted his chief strength, were unable to act, and

* Muratori does not give his authority for this anecdote. I have in vain tried to find it in any of the historians of that period. M. Sismondi, who had doubtless searched through them all, makes no mention of it whatever.

where they were set upon by the whole force of the enemy's infantry, who had all the advantage of the upper ground. The retreat of the assailants was cut off by the river which flowed at the foot of the mountains. The result was, that Ferdinand sustained a complete defeat, the pope's general, Simoneta, was killed, nearly all the baggage was taken, and the king himself arrived, attended by only twenty horsemen, at Naples.

Ferdinand was now without either an army or money, and it is probable that his cause would have been irretrievably lost, but for the devotion of his wife Isabella. To procure him supplies, she did not hesitate to go about Naples with a begging-box in her hand, soliciting aid, by which means she managed to obtain for him a sum of money sufficient to re-equip himself to a certain extent. It is generally supposed that she was the means of preventing the duke of Anjou following up his victory by marching directly to Naples. Had he done this, it is probable that the contest would then have been once for all decided in his favour. But he, in accordance with the advice given to him by the queen's uncle, the prince of Tarento, stopped to make himself master of the other places of less importance in the vicinity, before marching to the capital, "not knowing," as Machiavelli says, "that in kingdoms the extremities are governed by the head, and not the head by the extremities." And it was currently reported that the prince had tendered this advice in consequence of the intercession of his niece, who made her way into his camp, disguised as a Franciscan friar, and, throwing

herself at his feet, entreated him, if he did not wish to be the means of depriving her of the regal position to which he had assisted to raise her, to prevent John from consummating her husband's ruin.

Time was thus given to Ferdinand to make his distress known to the staunchest of his supporters, the duke of Milan. The constancy of the latter was in no way shaken by the misfortunes of his friend. After slightly reproaching him for his rashness at the Sarno, he rallied him on his prospects, and said that he, for one, would support him to the last. As an earnest of his good wishes, he sent him a sum of money and a body of two thousand horse and one thousand foot, under the command of his friend, Robert Sanseverino. He also persuaded Pope Pius, whose friendship does not appear to have stood the test of adversity as well as his own, not to desert his cause.

In the mean time, matters did not proceed better with Ferdinand in the other parts of his dominions. The brothers Sforza, after various manœuvring, made an attack on an intrenched position which Piccinino had taken up near San Fabiano, in the Abruzzi. After a severe contest, which lasted till darkness separated the combatants, the Sforzas found they had suffered so severely that they retired during the night. Piccinino then advanced into the dominions of the pope, where he did such mischief as to cause panic and disaffection within the walls of Rome. And it again required all Sforza's influence and address to prevent Pius detaching himself from the alliance of Fer-

dinand. He had sent word to Milan, that reasonable regard, as well for his own safety as for that of the holy church, would require him to do so, if he did not receive sufficient reinforcements to protect him from such annoyance. In reply, the duke sent him a bantering message, complaining that he was causing him more trouble by his timidity than the enemy had done by all their victories. But at the same time Alexander Sforza marched into the Territories of the Church, so considerably reinforced that Piccinino retired before him into the Abruzzi. The receipt of his friend's message, and the timely arrival of the army of his brother, confirmed the pontiff in his former allegiance.

Before the end of the year Ferdinand recovered much of the territory which he had lost after the battle of the Sarno. He retook Castellamare, and many other places in the vicinity of Naples. Cosenza, the capital of Calabria, was captured and barbarously plundered by his troops. He also managed to effect a reconciliation with several of his barons who had either been lukewarm in his cause, or given an actual support to his adversaries. In settling these affairs he was much benefited by the assistance of his wife, who, in addition to the advantages of great personal charms and graceful eloquence, derived considerable influence from her being a native of that part of Italy—a circumstance of no small import in exçiting the people against the French. Thus, in spite of the disasters of the Sarno and San Fabiano, Ferdinand stood before the end of the year almost on an equality with his adversary.

CHAPTER III.

DISTURBANCES AT GENOA—FRENCH DRIVEN INTO THE CITADEL.—CONTENTIONS BETWEEN THE ADORNI AND FREGOSI—ALLAYED BY THE MEDIATION OF THE CITIZENS. — GENOESE RECEIVE ASSISTANCE FROM SFORZA. — EXPEDITION SENT FROM FRANCE AGAINST GENOA, UNDER RÉNÉ OF ANJOU—TOTAL DESTRUCTION OF THE FRENCH ARMY BY THE GENOESE.—LOUIS FREGOSO MADE DOGE.—DEATH OF CHARLES IX.—SUCCESSION OF LOUIS XI.—HIS RECEPTION OF SFORZA'S AMBASSADOR.—WAR IN THE TERRITORY OF NAPLES. —FERDINAND IS JOINED BY SCANDERBEG.—ILLNESS OF SFORZA.—EFFORTS OF THE KING OF FRANCE, AND OF BIANCA MARIA, TO MAKE HIM CHANGE HIS POLICY.—REVOLT AND SUBJUGATION OF THE PIACENZANS.—IMPRISONMENT AND DEATH OF TIBERTO BRANDOLINO.—DEFEAT OF PICCININO NEAR TROIA.—LOSSES OF SIGISMUND MALATESTA.

AFTER the influence and the constancy of Sforza had placed Ferdinand in almost as good a position as he had been before his losses in the field, events occurred in Genoa which gave him a decided superiority. The people of that city, like most who have acted in the same manner, found that they had gained nothing by a change of masters. Their treasury having been exhausted by the expenses both of their own wars and of the expeditions which they had equipped to assist the duke of Anjou, it was found necessary to impose new taxes to raise money for the ordinary expenses of the state. The French mode of taxation, which exacted nothing from the nobles and everything from the citizens, was intolerable to a people who had been accustomed to some species of self-government; the national

prejudices of the Italians of all parties were much offended by an impolitic attempt to subject to these new burdens a number of citizens who, for past service, had been promised an immunity from all taxation; and it is probable that, in the words of Muratori, the duke of Milan, who could not but be uneasy at beholding a nest of Frenchmen in his immediate vicinity, secretly blew a cherishing breeze upon these seditions.

For some time the people continued pleading, remonstrating, and murmuring to no purpose. At last, on the 9th of March, they assembled in a tumultuous manner to discuss their grievances with the magistrates of their own order. On this occasion, many painted in glowing colours the injustices and hardships to which they were subject, but satisfactory remedies were proposed by none. At last a young man, apparently of a humble station in life, rose up and said, "This was not the time for debating; by the sword alone could these complaints be remedied;" and, having said this, he rushed forward and called on them to take arms.* But his words, though they were not forgotten, produced no effect at the moment; and it is the opinion of contemporary historians that, if severe measures of repression had been adopted at the time, the sedition might even then have been quelled.

During the remainder of the day, and the whole of the night, armed masses of people continued to assemble

* Simoneta, lib. xxviii. Who can doubt but that this young man was an agent of Sforza's? One cannot but suspect, also, that the indecisive measures of the French, which allowed the rebellion to come to a head, must have been prompted by people in his confidence.

in different parts of the city. At first the French tried to put them down by conciliatory promises; but it was now too late for measures of this sort. Every moment the tumults became more formidable. Paul Fregoso and Prosper Adorno, the heads of the old rival factions, whom a common hatred of the French had for a time reconciled, entered the city by different gates, each at the head of a considerable body of armed men from the country, and the French fled for safety to the citadel. But scarcely had the two old rivals driven their common enemy before them, when the spirit of discord began once more to show itself: though their hatred lay in the same direction, their interests were widely different, and they now began to dispute among themselves which was to be governor. A large number of the citizens, who might otherwise have been indifferent by which of their countrymen they were ruled, feared that, if Fregoso should obtain the upper hand, he would avenge the death of his brother. This circumstance for a time greatly increased the power of the Adorni; and a prevalent rumour that they were about to join the French in an attack upon their rivals, whether true or not, caused Fregoso to withdraw from the city. But people who seemed to have been sent thither on purpose made it their business to reconcile the citizens of the opposite parties, and they found no difficulty in persuading them that these jealousies had been caused entirely by the intrigues of the French and of their adherents, who, in order that they might make an easy prey of the Adorni, wished first to drive away all the

friends of the Fregosi. Thereupon was formed a provisional government of eight citizens, who began by ordering the head of the first-named party to depart from Genoa. But, after a time, both Prosper Adorno and Paul Fregoso were allowed to return; the former was elected doge without any opposition from his rival, and all parties agreed to unite heart and hand to expel the French from the citadel.

As the difficulty in raising money to defray the ordinary expenses of government had been the original cause of the discontent of the Genoese against the French, it could not be expected that they could continue a contest against one of the most powerful monarchs in Europe entirely out of their own resources. Accordingly they sent to Sforza, with whose real wishes they must have been tolerably well acquainted, to beg for assistance; and he was now able to interfere in the contest with much less detriment either to his honour or to his interest than on any former occasion. In the first place, the attempt of the Angevins to drive Ferdinand from the throne of his father had placed him, as a member of the Italian alliance, in direct hostility to them. In the next place he had been carrying on negotiations, by means of the duke of Savoy, with Louis the Dauphin of France, and he had received an intimation from him, who, like many other heirs-apparent, was in opposition to his father, that he would not view in an unfriendly light any attempt that might be made to drive his countrymen from Genoa. Therefore, throwing off the disguise of neutrality which

he had so long affected, he sent a force of about a thousand men, along with a considerable sum of money and several pieces of artillery, to assist the citizens in the siege of the inner city.

The capture of a place like the inner city, strongly fortified by nature and by art, must under any circumstances have been a tedious operation; and in the present instance it was protracted for a considerable length of time by the constantly reviving dissensions between Adorno and Fregoso. Though they had the greatest difficulty in preventing the French making murderous sallies from their stronghold, and though shells were continually discharged upon the city, which frequently destroyed entire houses with their inmates, the sense of their common danger did not make them, for any time at least, restrain their animosity. It required all the influence of Sforza to prevent the cause of their countrymen being ruined by their dissensions, and he at last, fearful of what might be the consequences if these two rivals continued in the same camp, persuaded Fregoso to come to him to Milan.

In this manner the siege was continued till the beginning of July, when the Genoese received the startling intelligence that they were about to be attacked by the combined forces and fleets of the king of France and the duke of Anjou. The terror excited by this intelligence might possibly have proved fatal to them, if it had not been for the firmness of Sforza and the confidence reposed in him by all. Though he did not send them any further assistance from his own troops,

lest he should not have an army sufficient to repel any attack that might be made against himself by the forces that had just come from France, he engaged one Marcus Pius, the signor of the neighbouring town of Carpi, to march with a small body of horse to their assistance; and he in no small degree strengthened their position by persuading Fregoso again to act in obedience to Adorno. One of Fregoso's first deeds was to seize and retain thirty of the richest citizens, for the purpose of getting money from them. Some thought that he was instigated to this act by his rival, who wished to make him unpopular; at all events, it could only have produced that effect, for he failed in extorting anything from his victims. It was finally arranged that the command of the force which was to defend the city against any attack that might be made on it by land was to be intrusted to Fregoso, while that of the besieging force in the interior remained, as before, with Adorno.

Shortly after these preparations had been made, the French troops, commanded by Réné in person, disembarked at Voragine, and advanced, experiencing scarcely any opposition, to within five miles of Genoa. In the opinion of most contemporary writers, if they had immediately proceeded to attack the city, both by sea and by land, they would have met with but a feeble resistance. But either because the troops needed repose, or in deference to the wishes of the Genoese nobles in the French camp—who, anxious to save their native city from being sacked, still hoped that matters

might be arranged by accommodation—the opportunity was allowed to go by, and time was given to the citizens to rally their spirits and their forces. However, after some skirmishes, in which it was ascertained that the French were not invincible, Réné, on the 17th July, ordered his whole army to march forward, and to carry the heights by which the city of Genoa is overlooked. He himself, being now too old to be of much service in the field, remained at sea, immediately beneath the hills where the action was to take place. The foremost division of the Italians was driven back at the first onset, but it was soon rallied, and remained, along with the main body of the army, firm on the summit. The French, by the time they approached them, were in no small degree exhausted by having had to climb up a mountain under a burning Italian sun and the weight of their heavy armour; while the Italians, who had not undergone anything like the same amount of fatigue, had the advantage of fighting under a climate to which they were accustomed, and had their strength recruited by a constant supply of refreshments from the city. Thus they were enabled to offer a protracted resistance to their once much-dreaded opponents.

The battle continued for some time without any decided result, till three horsemen, known to be in the service of Sforza, came in haste to the scene of action, and gave out that a considerable force, which had been despatched by their master, was already at hand. To insure credit to their assertion, they directed the atten-

tion of the combatants to a large body of men whom they had collected from the neighbouring towns, and ordered to assemble together in the distance. The actual appearance of the duke of Milan with the whole of his troops could not have produced a more decided result: the Genoese, raising a cheer in honour of Sforza, renewed the attack with fresh vigour; while the French, already exhausted by fatigue, taken aback by the rapidity of the attack, and auguring evil tidings from the cheer, immediately gave way. They were then driven with great precipitancy down the mountain which they had ascended so full of hope in the morning.

When, from his position in the ship beneath, Réné beheld the fine army of six thousand men, whom he had expected to enter Genoa in triumph, flying in confusion to the shore, he immediately put out to sea, hoping that, when they beheld their retreat cut off, despair might make them rally. But the nature of the ground rendered it impossible to restore order. The Genoese continued the pursuit as far as the sea, and no choice remained to the fugitives but to encounter the risk of the element, or to submit to their enemies. The havoc was increased by the number of peasants who, from desire of rapine or revenge, had joined the pursuers. Some of the fugitives perished in an attempt to swim to the ships in their heavy armour, and all the others fell into the hands of the Genoese; so that, of the force which only a few days before had disembarked at Voragine, scarcely one vestige was saved. As the French, being at that time, as Muratori says, a beastly

nation, did not give any quarter to the Italians, the latter now paid them in the same coin. Many of them, nevertheless, were taken alive, and reserved to be ransomed. The number of the French slain has been variously estimated at from two to four thousand—a strange contrast to some of the almost bloodless battles which have lately been described. Of the Genoese only three or four were killed in the field.

The defeat of their common enemy revived the dissensions between Adorno and Fregoso for the third time since the commencement of the revolt. The former, in virtue of the authority which had been deputed to him as doge, forbade the latter to enter the city, and, after he had made his way in by stealth, attempted to expel him by force. Thereupon arose a fierce contention, in which Sforza's troops remained neutral, and the result of which was, that Adorno was obliged to give way and to depart from the city. As Paul Fregoso was already an archbishop, it was thought that the office of doge would be unfitting for one of his sacred calling; so his cousin, Louis Fregoso, was chosen to fill the place vacated by his adversary. When order was thus restored among the Genoese, Réné made a formal surrender of the inner city, and retired without much loss of time to his own country. Shortly after this the king of France died, as was supposed of chagrin at the success of the Genoese revolution.

As Charles's son, now Louis XI., had expressed himself averse to the retention of Genoa by his father, the succession of the latter might be supposed by many

to guarantee the Genoese in the enjoyment of their liberty. But the views of that monarch, like those of most heirs-apparent who have been opposed to their fathers when living, immediately changed with his circumstances. To Sforza's ambassador, who was sent to Paris on his accession, he gave a reception not very dissimilar to that which our Henry V., on a like occasion, gave to the friends of his youth. On his requesting him that, as king, he would ratify the treaties that, as dauphin, he had made with the duke, he indignantly upbraided him with his master's having caused the destruction of his father's army at Genoa, and kept his kinsman, the duke of Anjou, from the crown of Naples. Nor was he much mollified by the reply of the ambassador, that he believed that all these things had been done not only with his consent, but to a great extent at his instigation.

While these things were going on at Genoa, the war continued in the kingdom of Naples without any remarkable result. As soon as the weather permitted, Piccinino took the field in the Abruzzi, and Sigismund Malatesta began attacking the dominions of the pope. The former was opposed by Alexander Sforza: the two armies continued to manœuvre and to skirmish in the presence of each other; and on one occasion, Donatus, a Milanese officer of note, whose name has frequently been mentioned, was surprised and taken prisoner; but Piccinino was finally obliged to retire before his antagonist, leaving him in undisputed possession of that territory. In the March of Ancona, Malatesta gained

some advantage over the pontifical troops, and was proceeding to join his forces with those of Piccinino, when he was recalled by the intelligence that a fresh army of the pope's had entered his dominions. But the most remarkable feature in the campaign was the pope's availing himself of the unsettled state of the kingdom of Naples, to take several cities belonging to his ally Ferdinand. Having heard that the inhabitants of Terracina—a town to which, it has already been mentioned, he laid claim—were discontented with Ferdinand, he ordered count Frederic of Urbino to take it in his name, and afterwards authorised him to extend his conquests over several cities in the neighbourhood. It was in vain that Sforza and Ferdinand remonstrated with him—he was determined to have some recompense for the perils to which his alliance with the latter had so frequently exposed his own dominions; and both the king and the duke were too well aware of the importance of having him on their side to take occasion to quarrel with him. He excused himself by saying that he had no hand in promoting the discontent of the inhabitants of Terracina, but that, if he had not taken the city, it would most certainly have gone over to the French, and that surely it was better for their common cause that it should belong to him than to their enemies. At the same time, in order to soothe Ferdinand, he sent him a considerable reinforcement under the command of his nephew Antonio. But as he was inferior to none of his order in their distinguishing quality of nepotism, he invested his said nephew Antonio with the fiefs

he had conquered in the kingdom of Naples, and requested Ferdinand to fulfil his promise of giving him his natural daughter Maria for his wife. The monarch, anxious to gratify the pope, not only did this, but also created this same Antonio duke of Amalfi, and grand justiciary of his kingdom.

Towards the end of the year, Ferdinand received no inconsiderable accession of strength from a new ally brought to him, as was thought, by the good offices of the pope. George Castriot, celebrated in history under the name of Scanderbeg, landed on the eastern coast of Apulia with a force of eight hundred men, designed for his assistance. This singular personage was the son of a sovereign in Albania, who had been forced into alliance with the Turks. When, on the death of his father, he beheld the hereditary dominions of his family appropriated by the sultan, he formed the project of regaining them; and though he had been forced to profess the religion and to serve in the camp of the Mussulmans, he continued to watch his opportunity. After the defeat of the Turks near Sophia in 1442, he passed over, and managed by a bold stratagem to do signal service, to the victors. Having collected under his banners all the Christians that were scattered throughout Epirus, he succeeded ere long in freeing the whole of the mountainous districts of that province and of Albania from their barbarian invaders. From that time he was noted as the most persevering as well as the most successful of the champions of Christendom. He became known to the Italians after the progress of the

Turks had begun to give them uneasiness; and some of the contributions which had been levied for the fitting out expeditions, which were never sent, against the Turks, were placed at his disposal. It now gave no small disgust to many to behold the resources which had been given to him, to be used against their common enemy, turned against a prince whom they wished to succeed.

It was evident that, as matters now stood, John of Anjou had but little chance of maintaining his position, unless fortune should take some unexpected turn in his favour. Some hope now began to dawn on him from a new quarter. In the month of August of the present year, Sforza was attacked by a dropsy, which many thought would be incurable; and it was evident that, if he were carried off by death, or if his capacity were to be weakened by disease, the main stay of his adversaries' cause would be gone. But though his body was doubtless debilitated by illness, he showed that his constancy was as unshaken and his judgment as discerning as ever. He, as well as the Venetians and Florentines, sent ambassadors to Paris to treat of various matters; and the king, though gracious to all, received Sforza's with the most marked attention. It turned out that Louis's great object was to induce him, as well as the pope, to withdraw their support from Ferdinand. After having used the arguments which had been so many times resorted to in vain, he went on to say that, even if his cousin, John of Anjou, were expelled from the peninsula of Italy, he would do his best to maintain him in

Sicily. But Sforza's resolution was as unshaken as ever; and he declared in a positive manner, that neither the prospect of advantage or loss to himself, nor respect for the wishes of the king, should induce him to relinquish the part he had taken. His family and friends tried in vain to alter his resolution. Even Bianca Maria, who in general had great influence over him, and who thought that, in the event of her husband's disease proving fatal, it would be better for her son to be found on the same side with the king of France, failed to effect anything; and when he became annoyed by her frequent solicitations, he forbad the mention of the subject in his presence.*

Sforza's unswerving constancy produced its due effect on the pope. When Louis sent him a message to the same effect as he had done to the duke of Milan, and even threatened, in the case of his refusal, to summon a general council to discuss the propriety of his former conduct, he replied in public, that he was bound by every obligation of justice and honour to continue acting as he did. At the same time he secretly intimated to Sforza that he would do exactly as he wished, and it was thought by many that he was in hopes that his death would soon leave him at liberty to act more in accordance with his wishes. It required a little decided language, and some actual threats from the duke, to keep him true to his obligations.

The many-tongued strumpet, Fame, had spread such exaggerated accounts of Sforza's illness, that it was

* Simoneta, lib. xxviii.

commonly believed in Italy, as well as in Europe, that he was at the point of death, if, indeed, he had not actually expired. And now many petty states which had licked, however they might have loathed, his hand, while in the plentitude of power, rose, like the meaner animals, anxious to have a kick at the old lion in his decrepitude; while others, who had never been beholden to him for aught, showed their constancy by standing by him, as they believed, in the hour of death. The owners of the soil around Piacenza rose up in a mass, and made an onslaught on Sforza's magistrates while they were actually engaged in the discharge of their duties. The inhabitants of the town, who had remained perfectly faithful since the terrible lesson they had received fourteen years before, were uncertain what part to take. Tiberto Brandolino, who, since Sforza's accession to the duchy of Milan, had been among the most honoured of his generals, now that he believed his patron was about to depart from the land of the living, did not hesitate to join his enemies. On the other hand, the governor of the place, though at first obliged to make a pretence of giving in to the insurgents, remained faithful to his trust; and having seized some of the ringleaders, he retained possession of the city. The Florentines sent ambassadors to Lombardy with orders to assure the duke of their continued friendship, and to stand by his family in the event of his death.

As soon as the duke heard what was going on at Piacenza, he sent thither the same Donatus who has so frequently been mentioned already as having done him

good service. The insurgents were soon dispersed by him, and their ringleader cast into prison, after a vain attempt to escape to Genoa. Tiberto Brandolino, who hoped that the part he had taken in the rebellion was as yet unknown to his master, asked leave to go to the scene of active operations in Naples; but as evidence of his guilt transpired before he took his departure, he was arrested, and confined at Piacenza. Some time after his captivity he was found dead in his dungeon. It is related by Sforza's secretary and biographer, and was generally circulated among his friends, that Tiberto had killed himself; but a report prevailed among the duke's enemies that he had been murdered by assassins sent thither by his order. A story so derogatory to Sforza found ready acceptance with the rebellious but subjugated Piacenzans; and the vulgar, ever ready to accommodate their superstitious imaginations to their prejudices, gave out that, when Brandolino's remains were carried from the prison to the grave, the devil was seen in the shape of a great mastiff sitting on his bier, snarling like Minos in the *Inferno* of Dante, and vowing vengeance against his murderers.*

It is probable that Piccinino, if he could have followed the bent of his inclinations, would not have remained an inactive spectator of the revolt at Piacenza; but he was this time obliged to devote all his energies to the conduct of the war in the southern provinces of Italy. In spite of the formidable accession of strength which had been received by his adversaries, he managed to

* *Inf.*, v. 4.

make head against them; and being joined by John of Anjou in person, he even retook several cities in the Abruzzi and Apulia which had fallen into their hands. His partial success, indeed, appears to have given some uneasiness to the duke of Milan, who complained much of the inactivity of his brother Alexander, and of the manner in which the resources which he had supplied to him and Ferdinand had been squandered away. At last, by dint of remonstrances and subsidies, they were persuaded to take the field by the beginning of July. Their first act was to march to the relief of Orsaria, a fortress that was then besieged by Piccinino. After some skirmishing on both sides, the besieging army was obliged to fall back upon Troia, where they were closely followed by their enemies. Here a general action took place, which, as it was fought in the presence of both the sovereigns, and as it was likely, in consequence of the exhaustion of the resources of both parties, to be decisive of the fate of the kingdom, was most obstinately contested. At the end of the day the Angevins fled in disorder, leaving their camp to be pillaged by their enemies. Piccinino, when from the walls of Troia he beheld the victors dispersed through his tents in quest of booty, sallied forth upon them at the head of a select body of men. But all his attempts to repair the disaster were in vain. Though he managed to recover several prisoners, and even to cause some panic among the conquerors, it was not long before Ferdinand and Alexander Sforza collected together a body of cavalry, with which they drove him and his followers back to the city.

Fortune seemed now to have taken a decided turn in favour of Ferdinand. John of Anjou and Piccinino retired the night of the battle, leaving Troia and the whole of the surrounding country to the conquerors. They still seem to have entertained some hopes of bringing together the scattered supporters of their party, so as to be able again to face the enemy. But they soon learned that fortune had not dealt better with their friends than with themselves. Some little time before, Sigismund Malatesta had set forth at the head of a considerable force, with the intention of forming a junction with them in the Abruzzi; but he was soon stopped by the startling intelligence that the pope, in revenge for the many annoyances he had sustained from him, had sent an invading force into his dominions under the command of Frederic of Urbino. Sigismund, in spite of all his efforts to defend himself, in a short time beheld the fairest of his dominions overrun by the enemy; and having as yet heard nothing of the battle of Troia, he betook himself by sea to the Abruzzi, to implore the assistance of John of Anjou and Piccinino. The allies then first became acquainted with the extent of each other's disasters; and Sigismund, seeing no hope of aid in any quarter, was obliged to return to do the best for himself in what remained to him of his former dominions.

CHAPTER IV.

EFFECTS OF THE BATTLE OF TROIA. — SFORZA PERSUADES MANY OF THE NEAPOLITAN BARONS TO SUBMIT TO FERDINAND.—PICCININO LEAVES THE ANGEVIN PARTY. — RUIN OF SIGISMUND MALATESTA. — DEATH OF THE PRINCE OF TARENTO. — DISCONTENT OF THE GENOESE. — NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN SFORZA AND THE KING OF FRANCE. — SFORZA'S MEASURES TO TAKE POSSESSION OF GENOA.—SURRENDER OF THE CITY AND GARRISON TO HIM.—GENOESE SEND AMBASSADORS TO PUT SFORZA IN POSSESSION OF THE CITY — THEIR RECEPTION — SPEECHES ON THE OCCASION. — ARCHBISHOP PAULO TREGOSO TURNS PIRATE, BUT HIS SHIPS ARE TAKEN BY THE GENOESE.—JOHN OF ANJOU RETURNS TO FRANCE.

THE battle of Troia was decisive of the Neapolitan war. Alexander and Ferdinand began, without delay, to profit by their victory. The city of Troia itself did not hold out long—the inhabitants soon sent word to Alexander Sforza that they were willing to surrender to him in the name of his brother, the duke of Milan; but that they would submit to any extremity before putting themselves again under a sovereign of the house of Aragon. To facilitate matters, Alexander consented to take the city in the name of his brother, but at the same time he gave Ferdinand to understand that it should be given to his son as a part of Hippolyta's dowry. Not long afterwards, Foggia, Ascoli, and other places in the neighbourhood, submitted; and in order that the soldiers might not be without their due share of the fruits of the victory, some towns of minor importance were sacked and made over to them.

It was now that many of the rebellious barons, seeing that the chief whom they had chosen had failed, began to make friends to themselves of one whose protection they were likely to need. Among the first of these was Antonio Orsini, the prince of Tarento, who was for a long time supposed to have furnished to the Angevin party the sinews of war, but who was now easily persuaded to accept the offers made by Ferdinand. The latter guaranteed him in the full possession of his fiefs, and promised him the situation of captain-general of his forces, on the condition of his joining him. But on no one occasion, perhaps, was the general dislike and distrust of Ferdinand, and the respect which was universally entertained towards Sforza, made more manifest than on this. Many of the chiefs of the Angevin party intimated to the Milanese ambassadors their willingness to submit to their duke, and earnestly begged that he would not ask them to put themselves under the dominion of the new monarch. Indeed, a less prudent man, in Sforza's situation, might have availed himself of these offers to add to his dominions the kingdom of Naples. But he was wise enough to know that on many occasions, according to the aphorism of Hesiod, "the half was more than the whole;"* and he now wisely declined to endanger the security of the sovereignty he had already acquired, by a vain attempt to grasp at another, more especially as there now appeared to be every probability of his being able to place there a king

* "Νήπιοι· οὐδ' ἴασιν ὅσῳ πλέον ἥμισυ παντός·"
Hesiod, Εργα και ἡμερ· v. 40.

who, for many reasons, would be obliged to act as he wished. Nevertheless, it required all his address to persuade those who would so willingly have been ruled by him, to trust to the clemency or promises of Ferdinand.

In the kingdom of Naples, little now remained to be done by fighting. Piccinino, indeed, brought his forces to the assistance of some of the barons who still held out in desperation; but he appeared more anxious to enrich himself at their expense, than to secure their independence. Under some pretext or other he took the town of Celano; whence he carried off an immense quantity of booty in the shape of gold, silver, and precious stones, along with sufficient grain and cattle to support his army for some time to come. After this he in some degree redeemed his reputation, by forcing Ferdinand to raise the siege of a small fortress in the territory of Marino. But finding himself, about the middle of August, confronted by Alexander Sforza, at the head of a considerable army, he came to be of opinion that he could no longer remain in the service of the Angevins with any hope of advantage. Alexander, at the time that he might possibly have been making preparations for an engagement, received a message from his adversary, requesting a pass for the sake of having some private conversation with him. The result of this private conversation was, that Piccinino was to leave the duke of Anjou, and take service under Ferdinand, in return for which he was to be allowed to retain possession of Sulmona, and other places he had occupied in the

Neapolitan territory, and receive a salary of ninety thousand golden ducats from him and his allies. These terms are said not to have been very acceptable to Ferdinand; and, indeed, they might have been thought by many rather too liberal to be offered to a vanquished foe. But the king's allies were anxious to put a speedy termination to a war of which the whole burden, and no small part of the risk, devolved on themselves; and they compelled him to acquiesce in a measure which seemed to deprive the opposite party of their only hope of salvation.

This arrangement of Piccinino's produced the desired effects. City after city, and province after province, submitted to Ferdinand. The city of Manfredonia sustained a blockade of a few days, and had actually sent to propose terms of capitulation, when a report was spread that a vessel with the Angevin flag was approaching. A shout in favour of the duke of Anjou's name was raised by the mob, on which many of the more sober-minded of the citizens, who saw the futility of any resistance, requested Ferdinand to send a body of troops sufficient to oppose any force that might be landed from this vessel. When the gates were opened to admit them, the whole army rushed in and began the work of pillage, nor were all the efforts of Ferdinand able to save this city from their avidity.

From this time the leaders of the opposite party seemed to have thought their case hopeless. The duke of Sessa, who had been among the first to invite John of Anjou to the kingdom, and among the staunchest of

his supporters, implored the pardon and sought the alliance of Ferdinand. To obtain the former, he put him in possession of several of his most important fortresses, and cemented the latter by arranging a marriage between his own son and the king's daughter. And John of Anjou, finding no rest for the sole of his foot in the kingdom he had once all but conquered, retired to Ischia, there to await any succours that might be sent to him by his father or the king of France.

Matters did not go better with the allies and well-wishers of John. The king of France, as will presently be explained, found that he had so much to do at home, that he did not care to embarrass himself by interfering in the affairs of the peninsula. The Venetians, who had always secretly supported, though they had never openly espoused his cause, were now engaged in a disastrous war with the Turks and with the Emperor of Germany; so from them he could expect nothing. In the beginning of the year, Sigismund Malatesta had made a vigorous effort to recover his lost ground, but fortune did not favour him. Fano, one of his principal towns, after a protracted resistance, surrendered to the duke of Urbino, and he was soon left with nothing except the town of Rimini itself, and a few fortresses of minor importance. In his desperation he appealed to the Venetians for succour, but they, for the reasons already mentioned, could do nothing for him but intercede in his behalf with the pontiff. Though they were joined in this by the Florentines, it was with great difficulty that Pius could be prevailed upon to leave him

in possession of the only small spot in his former dominions that now remained to him, and he did so only on the condition of its reverting to the Territories of the Church after his death. This was the end of the family of Malatesta, whose representatives have already been mentioned as having been celebrated, about a century and a half before, as combining the vices of a traitor and a mastiff,* and who do not appear to have become less cruel or treacherous in the course of generations.

Before the end of the year Ferdinand's good fortune was crowned by his succeeding to the wealth and dominions of a man who, if he lived, might have been a thorn in his side. On the 15th of November expired Antonio Orsini, the prince of Tarento. Though he had arrived at an age when nature has generally run its course, there were not wanting those who insinuated that he had been strangled by order of the king; and it is certain that Ferdinand was not scrupulous in such matters. After his death was found a will, suspected by many to have been forged, leaving Ferdinand heir to all his states and his treasures. These treasures, as he had been given to hoarding in his old age, were considerable, and were said to have amounted to a million florins of gold. Thus did Ferdinand become possessed of almost the only spot in his kingdom which might have afforded to his enemies a basis for the recommencement of their operations, and also of money sufficient to maintain an army to secure him in the possession of his dominions.

* Dante. *Inf.*, xxvii.-xliii.; xxviii.-lxxxi.

Since the beginning of the fifteenth century the Genoese had shown themselves as restless, under any form of government, as the Florentines had been one century before. Being jealous of the elevation of, or discontented with the protection afforded them by, their native rulers, they had at different times put themselves under the Visconti, or the kings of France, and when they found that they had gained nothing by the change, they had recalled their former governors. Even while they were ruled by their countrymen, the spirit of party generally ran so high that it was seldom that the same man could maintain for any time the chief place in the republic. After they had called in and driven out the French in the manner described, and after the rival factions had fought for supremacy almost beneath the cannon of the enemy, they submitted for a time to the government of the Fregosi. In the space of two years they made trial of three different members of the family, some of whom they elevated and deposed more than once; and they found their tyranny or their incapacity alike unendurable. The former caused all those who had the means of living elsewhere to take their departure; and in consequence of the latter, several of the subject cities in the neighbourhood refused any longer to acknowledge their authority. Many of them made secret overtures to, and some of their own accord actually hoisted the standards of, the duke of Milan.

A man of Sforza's sagacity could not be an inattentive observer of the events that might put him in

possession of a strip of country that was necessary for the consolidation and the security of his own dominions. But he was much too prudent to involve himself in direct hostilities with the king of France; for though he had, in opposition to his wishes, stoutly maintained the cause of Ferdinand in the kingdom of Naples, and assisted in expelling the forces of his rival from Genoa, the Italian alliance had afforded him a pretext for these acts, which were very different from a direct attempt to take for himself any portion of territory to which that monarch laid claim. But while the above-mentioned events were taking place at Genoa, others had occurred in France which made Louis prefer the friendship of one of the most influential of his neighbours, and the most politic prince of the day, to the nominal possession of a few cities in a foreign country. During the reign of his predecessor, the power of the feudal aristocracy had grown to such a height as to threaten the dismemberment of his kingdom, and it was now his object to humiliate and to subject the barons, though he had formerly supported them when they were opposed to his father. Being skilled beyond the other princes north of the Alps in what may be termed the science of politics, he clearly perceived and appreciated the genius of Sforza; and he was determined that his enemies should not have the benefit of his friendship or of his counsels. The town of Savona, the only place still in his possession on the coast of Italy, so far from yielding him any revenue, was actually taxing his resources for the maintenance of a garrison; and he had too much on hand

to think of making any attempt to regain Genoa and its other dependencies. He therefore determined to purchase the friendship of Sforza, by making over to him those claims and rights, which, though a source of embarrassment to himself, would be invaluable to the owner of Milan.

The king of France knew the value of public opinion far too well to do anything which should lead others to suppose that he was seeking to purchase the support of an Italian prince by any sort of concession. But he authorised his ambassador at the court of Rome to drop to Sforza's friends some hints of his altered sentiments with regard to his Italian possessions, and to insinuate that, if the duke would make overtures of friendship and alliance to the king, they might make some arrangement advantageous to both. These hints, having been duly made, were not lost upon Sforza, and the ambassadors that he sent thereupon to the court of France found no difficulty in settling everything according to his wishes. The king of France and his friend, the duke of Milan, entered into a treaty, which, it was agreed, was in no way to effect the engagements of the latter with the Italian alliance. The former made over to his new friend the possession of Savona, and all his claims to the sovereignty of Genoa, and sent formal intimation of this clause in the treaty to the Venetians and the other potentates of Italy, threatening them with his hostility in the event of their interference. Sforza immediately sent a body of troops to Savona, under the command of his brother Conrad Foliano, who entered

the citadel amidst the acclamations of the inhabitants. At the same time a marriage was arranged between Galeazzo Sforza and a princess of the house of France. This gave such offence to the marquis of Mantua, one of whose daughters had been betrothed to Galeazzo, that he entered the service of the Venetians in disgust, and became the chief captain of their forces.

To get possession of Genoa, Sforza had now only to arrange matters with the present ruler and inhabitants of the city. It seemed impossible, indeed, that it could long continue in its present state. Many who had fled from it in fear or disgust had established their headquarters at Savona, whence they ceased not to entreat the duke of Milan to put an end to their troubles by giving to their country the benefit of his government. It was generally supposed, too, that those who remained at Genoa, though compelled by fear to submit to, were far from being content with, their present rulers. Sforza, thus finding that the rights he had derived from his treaty with the king were backed by the wishes of the people, endeavoured to persuade Fregoso, by promises and by threats, to give up possession of the city to him. But on the latter refusing to be thus ousted from his possessions, he entered into a league with the head of the opposite faction, and even with some of the coadjutors of the reigning doge, who, as they held fiefs in his dominions, were obliged to act as he wished. It was agreed they were to form a junction with the exiled nobles, many of whom owned fortresses in the surrounding mountains, and that, after receiving a reinforce-

ment from Milan, they should march upon Genoa. It was also settled that Sforza's faithful officer, Donatus, was to come to their assistance with a part of the garrison that had been left at Savona.

Paul Fregoso, beholding himself thus menaced on all sides, determined to resist to the uttermost. Having put the city in a state of defence, and left a considerable garrison in the castle, he departed with three triremes, hoping to collect all his adherents in some point on the coast, and to return with a large force. In the mean time, the enemy advanced with but little opposition, and they soon got possession of one of the gates, which admitted them into the outer city. The people, who at first remained neutral, now declared in favour of the Milanese; and being joined by a great crowd of exiles and malcontents who returned with the army, they did obeisance to Sforza's officers as the representatives of their doge. Vigorous preparations were then made to storm the citadel with all the artillery that could be sent from Milan. Among those who had been left in the citadel by the fugitive doge was Bartolomea, his brother Peter's wife, and owner of some cities in the neighbourhood. That lady, frightened at the prospect of the cannon being directed against her, sent privately to treat with the besiegers, but endeavoured to protract the negotiations as much as possible, hoping that time might be given to her brother-in-law to collect his forces, and to come to their relief. But the Milanese officers, determined to show her that, if she meant to save her own possessions, no time was to

be lost, attacked and took possession of several of her cities. On hearing of this, she did not delay any longer, and agreed to make over to them the inner town, on the condition of being allowed to retain her own possessions, and of receiving fourteen thousand florins of gold. The Milanese soldiers were admitted by night, and the garrison of Fregoso, being taken by surprise, offered no resistance.

Both Sforza and his friends were anxious that he should appear to have got possession of Genoa, more by the wishes of the great majority of the citizens than by right of conquest. Accordingly, preparations were made to invest him with his new dignity, in a manner that might attract the notice of all Italy. Twenty-four people, taken from different orders of the citizens, were chosen to go as ambassadors to Milan, for the purpose of doing honour to their new duke, and of arranging with him the form of their government. Two hundred more followed in their train. As soon as it was known that they were approaching Milan, they were met by the sons of Sforza and the chief men of the state, who had been ordered to conduct them with all dignity into the city. The first-born of the sons, Galeazzo Maria, having taken the right hand of the one who appeared to be entitled to precedence among the ambassadors, proceeded by his side; the other sons of the duke and the Milanese nobles having done the same with the remaining ambassadors, followed, in the order of their ages and rank: they then entered in a procession of two and two into the city, amidst martial music

and the shouts of the populace. The ambassadors were brought to a palace that had been prepared for their reception. Three days were spent in festivals of the most magnificent nature, and on the fourth it was settled that they were to be received by the duke.

When the appointed time had come, Sforza appeared on an elevated platform in the chief hall in the Curia, with Bianca Maria by his side, and the princes and princesses, and the great officers of state, around and behind him. On the platform was a throne, above which were hangings of wonderful texture and many colours. All were clad in their state apparel: the appearance of the duke was rendered, if possible, more imposing than usual, by the silver embroidery at the bottom of his robe, and by a pearl of great price which he wore on his head. Many of the other nobles appeared on a less elevated platform, on each side of which the fairest of the Milanese matrons and maids added by their presence to the beauty of the scene. Seats were provided for the ladies as well as for the most dignified of the courtiers and nobility, and the floor of the great hall was strewed with Oriental tapestry, flowers, and garlands. Free ingress was allowed to the people, while bars were fixed across the hall in such a manner as to prevent them trespassing on the space allotted to the ambassadors. In due time the ambassadors themselves appeared, attracting, it is related, the admiration of all, both by their apparel and their gait. It might almost be fancied, without exag-

geration, says a contemporary historian,* that they were the chief of the Roman Senate of yore, having full powers delegated to them on some important occasion. As they appeared before the duke, with bended knees and heads uncovered, he, as well as the duchess, took them in the most gracious manner by their hands, and ordered them to arise. Leave having been given them to speak, they stepped back a few paces from the ducal throne; after which one of them, by name Baptista Goanna, a lawyer by profession, who seemed, both in dignity and in age, to take precedence of the others, addressed the son of the peasant of Cotignola as follows:—

"Most magnanimous and invincible of sovereigns, the republic of Genoa, which, after years of suffering from anarchy and discord, has been considering long and anxiously how it can be ruled with immunity from these evils, and with the greatest advantage to all, has come to the resolution to seek out some prince who is superior to all others in wisdom, justice, and honesty. Experience, indeed, has shown us that a country can no more be ruled by a multitude than a ship can be steered by many pilots, or an army led by many generals. For we, who are renowned from East to West for our victories, our colonies, and our commerce—we who have conquered so many kings, princes, and free states, have not been able to keep ourselves in subjection. We see plainly that, if we do not alter our system, we shall not cease to be torn by discord. As heaven, the common

* Simoneta, lib. xxx.

country of all the good, is ruled by one God, it is necessary for us to be under one prince, who can rule and manage everything by his wisdom and virtue. Casting our eyes over all Italy, and thence over all Europe, we see no one so worthy to fill this post as yourself. Consider, we beseech you, the greatness of the offer that we now make to you; consider that, if you accept it, you will have most ample opportunity of exhibiting your talents and your virtue to all nations, and that so you will acquire great and imperishable fame. Think what a noble work it will be for you to heal the wounds of our bleeding city, to extinguish the fire of faction, to see that equal justice is rendered to all men. In return for this, you will have the rule over the whole coast of Liguria down to the territory of Pisa, along with the noble island of Corsica. In addition, you will have in the East the islands of Thasos, Lesbos, and Chios, besides the town of Amacosto, the largest and richest in the island of Cyprus, Amassa and Caffa on the coast of the Black Sea, besides the region of Tana, as far as the Don in Scythia. In all these great cities, the foundations of which have been laid by the Genoese in the most distant parts of the world, will your victorious standards be unfurled, and your great name be celebrated. To be brief, you are looked upon by all Christians as one sent to them from heaven at the present time, and worthy to be adored by them and by barbarians alike."

After this very complimentary address, the standard, the sceptre, and the great seal of the republic, along with the keys of the city, were presented to him by

Giovanni Sierra, another lawyer, who at the same time made a speech, in which, however, the flattery must have appeared too glaring to be acceptable. After saying that it would require another Livy or another Xenophon duly to commemorate all the great deeds that he had done, for that they surpassed the powers of all living historians, he added, that a still greater deed remained for him to do—to restore peace to their distracted city. The glory arising from military achievements, he said, must be shared in by others, while that resulting from the task last mentioned would belong to him alone. He concluded by describing the glory that would accrue to him therefrom in three of those lines of Virgil, written in praise of Augustus, in a style sufficiently adulatory to justify the expression applied by Tacitus to the prose writers of the period, "donec gliscente adulatione deterrerentur." *

When all the insignia of the state had been duly delivered, Sforza, holding the sceptre of Genoa in his own hand, having placed the standard in that of Galeazzo, and given over the keys and seal to his two next sons, made the following gracious reply :—

"Pleasing to us, O men of Genoa, was your arrival ; most pleasing and most agreeable has been your speech. We have always had an affectionate regard for your interests, and wished for that which was most conducive to your dignity and your tranquillity. Many things, indeed, appear to us to make it advisable for all parties that both Milan and Genoa should be under the

* *Annal.* lib. i. cap. I.

same governor. The long line of frontier between the two states, and the commercial intercourse that is constantly passing between them, renders it impossible that prosperity or adversity can ever happen to one without in some way affecting the other. Wherefore we avail ourselves of your offer, not so much for the sake of adding to our own empire, which the Almighty has already made sufficiently extensive and powerful, as for that of benefiting both you and our own subjects. Of course, we are duly aware how much we are increasing our own dignity and power by so doing, and we are also sensible of the responsibility which thereby we are entailing on ourselves; wherefore we shall strive to perform, in the best manner possible, the duties that you have committed to us. If we have any qualities which fit us for undertaking these duties, to God be the glory, whom we are also to thank for whatever fortune we have enjoyed during our life."

The speeches being ended, the Genoese ambassadors took the oaths of perpetual allegiance to Sforza and his descendants on behalf of themselves and their fellow-citizens, and in due time the assembly dispersed.

The delegates, after their return to Genoa, found that the archbishop, Paul Fregoso, who at one time thought that the accepting the office of doge might be incompatible with his sacred character, had turned pirate. As he was unable to collect a sufficient force to make a descent on the city, he avenged himself on his countrymen by making attacks on their argosies, wherever they could be found trading on the waters of the Mediterranean. His first attempt was against four of

their vessels, just as they were about to enter the port of Villafranca; but they gave him such a warm reception that he was induced to change his quarters, and to hover around the coast of Sicily. It could hardly, however, be expected that the Genoese, who had conquered mighty kingdoms, and extended their empire into remote and formerly unexplored regions, would long continue to put up with annoyances of this description. One of their first acts, after peace and tranquillity had been restored to them under the government of Sforza, was to send against the pirate archbishop four vessels, under the command of Francesco Spinola. These vessels fell in with his holiness near the island of Corsica, where they took all his ships, after he himself, with all his crews, had made their escape in small boats. After this, Genoa had rest from its troubles for fourteen years.

About the same time, also, John of Anjou came to the resolution of abandoning all further attempts to make himself king of Naples. In the beginning of the year 1464, his father Réné had sent him a fleet of ten galleys from Marseilles, hoping that he might once more be put in a state to take the field; but on hearing of the death of Antonio Orsini, in whom, notwithstanding his treaty with Ferdinand, he seems to have placed some hopes, as also of Sforza's alliance with the king of France, and of the revolution of Genoa, he abandoned the enterprise in despair. In the sixth year after he had departed from France with such high expectations, he returned thither with all the anguish of mind that is usually caused by blighted hopes and the fruitless expenditure of energy and resources.

BOOK EIGHTH.

CONCLUSION.

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POSITION OF SFORZA.—STATE OF AFFAIRS AT FLORENCE.—PROCEEDINGS OF LUCAS PITTI.—DEATH AND CHARACTER OF COSMO DE' MEDICI.—POPE PIUS ENDEAVOURS TO ASSEMBLE AN EXPEDITION AGAINST THE TURKS AT ANCONA —HIS DISAPPOINTMENT, AND DEATH.—TYRANNY OF FERDINAND.—PICCININO GOES TO MILAN AND IS MARRIED TO DRUSIANA—HIS RECEPTION THERE—DEPARTS FOR NAPLES—IS THROWN INTO PRISON, AND MURDERED. —SUSPICIONS CONCERNING SFORZA.—OPINIONS OF HISTORIANS.—GALEAZZO TAKES THE COMMAND OF AN EXPEDITION AGAINST THE REBELLIOUS NOBLES OF FRANCE—HIS SUCCESS.—DEATH OF FRANCESCO SFORZA.—CONDUCT OF BIANCA MARIA.—REMARKS ON SFORZA'S CHARACTER.

IT must be acknowledged that few military adventurers ever succeeded better than Francesco Sforza. Forty years before the event just narrated, he had inherited from his father the uncertain possession of some isolated fiefs, and the confidence of a number of mercenary soldiers. He was now lord of the most fertile, if not of the fairest, of the lands of Italy. His dominions comprised two cities, to which the names of Grande and Superba had been given, and one of which commanded the commerce of the seas between the

Pillars of Hercules and the mouth of the Don. His colonial empire was inferior to that of the Venetians alone. As he had succeeded in carrying out to his heart's desire the stipulations of the Italian alliance, as the chief man in the republic of Florence was the most intimate of his friends, and as neither the pope nor the king of Naples dared do anything against his wishes, his influence may be said to have been paramount in the peninsula. Moreover, his alliance was eagerly sought after by one of the most powerful of the monarchs north of the Alps.

After he had thus established his influence and added to his dignity, he did not complete any enterprise of importance in Italy. He talked at one time of sending his son, Ludovico Sforza, in command of an expedition against the Turks; and in the following year he despatched his heir, Galeazzo Maria, along with some of his best captains, and a considerable force, to assist the king of France against his refractory barons. But he never sent the former, and did not live to witness the return of the latter. Little now remains for his biographer but to notice the simultaneous departure from the great stage of human existence of many of those who had played the most conspicuous parts in the drama narrated.

The first that was called away was the oldest and staunchest of Sforza's friends, Cosmo de' Medici. During the first twenty-one years after his return from exile, the presence and popularity of Neri Capponi had operated as a salutary check upon himself and his friends;

it prevented him from abusing his power, and kept them from quarrelling among themselves. At the death of Neri Capponi, in the year 1455, Cosmo had arrived at the age of sixty-seven, a time of life when men seldom change their habits, by whatever means they may have been formed. But as he began to wax old, his friends were without either a rival or ruler to keep them in order; their evil passions broke forth unrestrained, and the citizens, having become disgusted at their conduct, refused any longer to intrust the chief management of their affairs to their committee of dictators, which had been denominated Balia. For some time great confusion and discontent continued to prevail among all orders. Cosmo was in vain solicited to use his influence to have another balia appointed, till at last one of his former adherents, Lucas Pitti, filled the palace with his armed retainers, and forced the people to intrust the government to a committee of his own creatures. The balia so chosen made the most violent use of their authority, and they hesitated not to torture, to banish, or to kill, those whom they thought likely to be troublesome opponents. Lucas Pitti himself took presents from all those who had anything to hope or to fear, and with the funds so raised he began building the palace which still bears his name. To facilitate its erection, he constituted it an asylum for all those who for any reason were afraid to show their faces in Florence.

To Cosmo, who had always been careful not to make any display in the city that he thought likely to attract

the observation or excite the jealousy of others, not only was Pitti's general mode of proceeding offensive, but the building of the palace itself was peculiarly so. Disgusted at the turn that affairs were taking, and beginning to feel the infirmities of age, he retired to his country seat at Careggi, and gradually withdrew himself from political life. In his latter days he is said to have felt much regret that he had not succeeded in his oft-tried conquest of Lucca, more especially as his friend, Francesco Sforza, had often held forth promises of aiding him in the same, should he ever attain the sovereignty of Milan, but had afterwards, like Lucullus's soldier in Horace,* determined to leave such enterprises to those who had their fortune to make. The disappointments and the infirmities of age were aggravated by the death of his favourite son, which took place about the end of the year 1463. He felt this blow the more acutely, as it was to him that he principally looked for maintaining the position of his family, the other being unfitted through ill health for public business. It is related that, on being carried through his house a short time after his bereavement, he said with a sigh, "This is too large a house for so small a family!" alluding, probably, to the incapacity of his other son to fill his position. He himself did not long survive the shock, and he departed from this scene on August 13, 1464, in his seventy-seventh year.

Though Cosmo's last years were not the brightest of his life, he had even then but little to complain of beyond

* *Ep.* ii. 2, 25–40.

the cares and disappointments which must be felt by every party-leader whose existence is prolonged to old age. His griefs, such as they were, cannot be said to have in any way either diminished his glory among his surviving contemporaries, or tarnished his memory. There is, perhaps, no other instance in history of a citizen having attained so much power in a free state, and having afterwards so little abused it. Almost all the potentates of Christendom sent to condole with his son, and the regrets of his countrymen were manifested by the number who attended his funeral. By a public decree, the words "Padre della patria" were inscribed on his tomb.

The next public character of the day that made his exit was Pope Pius. After the retreat of the duke of Anjou to Ischia, he was exceedingly anxious to get up a vigorous crusade against the Turks, perhaps with a view to wipe out the imputation that had been made against him of misappropriating the resources that had been intrusted to him for that purpose. The champions of Christendom were summoned to meet him at Ancona; and though many doubted the sincerity of his promises, and all must have thought him unwarlike and infirm, he declared his intention of embarking with them himself, and sharing in the perils of the expedition. The call, however, was but feebly responded to; though the Venetians had promised to send a fleet, and the dukes of Milan and Burgundy had each engaged to furnish an army, the head of the Christian religion found few at the place of rendezvous but pilgrims and adventurers.

Many of those who had gone there before him had already departed, on beholding neither ships to transport them nor captains to lead them against the enemy; and the ardour of those that remained was soon damped by finding that the pope had nothing but spiritual rewards to give them. The countenance of the old man, as he was borne to the city on a litter, betrayed marks of grief and disappointment not to be mistaken; and though he relaxed not in his endeavours to get the promised forces brought together, the failure of his expectations proved too heavy a blow for his already shattered constitution. The Venetian fleet arrived on the 14th of August, but disease and vexation had already done their work with Pope Pius; and on the succeeding night he expired, amidst the tears, it is said, of his cardinals and attendants. His character has been painted in the most flattering colours; but on a calm review of his history, it must be acknowledged that, if he had many excellent qualities, he was also tainted with several of the faults incident to his order and age. The praise to which he is well entitled for his sagacity, must be tempered by the blame so justly due to his nepotism.

Piccinino was not long suffered to survive the success of Ferdinand and the aggrandisement of Sforza. Whatever may have been his faults, the circumstances attending his death, forming, as they do, one of the dark passages of the history of Italy, invest his end with a melancholy interest. After the departure of John of Anjou from Ischia, Ferdinand showed by his conduct

that it was not without reason that the insurgent barons had feared his tyranny at the commencement, and mistrusted his sincerity at the termination of the rebellion. The majority of them had, partly, as has already been related, by the persuasions of Sforza, and partly from the despair of doing better, submitted to him; but no sooner had the king got them completely in his power than he began to find divers excuses for breaking his word. It has been mentioned that many suspected that the death of the prince of Tarento had been accelerated by foul play. After this event the duke of Sessa, who was the next most powerful baron in the kingdom, and who had been the next to give in his adherence to Ferdinand, felt the vengeance of the conqueror. The king, as he was one day enjoying the recreation of the chase near the duke's castle, expressed a desire to see his faithful subject, and to behold his son, to whom his own daughter had already been betrothed. The duke, who had previously been prepared by Alexander Sforza for the interview, hesitated not to go forth to meet his sovereign; and when he had come into his presence, he was seized, placed on a mule, and conducted to a dungeon in Naples.

This, and other deeds of a like nature, showed Piccinino that the kingdom of Naples was no safe resting-place for him. Perplexed and disturbed, he wrote to Sforza to request his protection, and he received from him the most assured promises of support, and an invitation to come to Milan forthwith, to celebrate his nuptials with the long-promised Drusiana. Attempts to

dissuade him from taking this step were made by his friends, who thought that Sforza, though endowed with many great and good qualities, was, when his interest clashed with his feelings, no better than his contemporaries. It was insinuated by some that he had been privy to the murder of the duke of Sessa—an opinion which, in some degree, gained ground from the circumstance of his brother Alexander having assisted to bring about the interview between him and the king. And it is certain that Piccinino's power at this time was sufficient to excite apprehensions that he might one day become a formidable adversary. He was in great reputation for valour and military skill; he commanded some of the best troops in Italy, and he was in possession of several important fiefs in the kingdom of Naples. He was allowed to retain the surnames of the houses of Aragon and Visconti—a privilege which in no small degree augmented his dignity in the eyes of the vulgar, and might be of some advantage to him, should he ever aspire to the rank of a sovereign. It is probable that he himself was not without misgivings with respect to the step that he had been invited to take; but he mistrusted Sforza less than Ferdinand, and was assured by the Bolognese and the Florentines that he had nothing to fear.

When he entered Milan, the people seemed to vie with the duke in honouring him. His presence caused many to reflect on the times when his father had fought for the last of the Visconti, with all the fond regret that the memory of bygone events usually inspires—a

regret which, perhaps, might in this instance have been heightened by comparing the parentage of their present with that of their last duke; it also recalled their attempts, vain though they were, to establish their independence, and drew forth the feelings both of those who were discontented or disappointed with their present ruler, and of those who fancied that they perceived any seeds of incapacity or violence in his successor. Even those who were attached to Sforza—and there is no reason to suppose that they were not numerous—were anxious to show respect to a brave but unsuccessful opponent. The consequence was, that his appearance in the city drew forth a burst of enthusiasm, which may possibly have astonished or alarmed the duke; and many suppose that the shouts of "Braccio!" which were everywhere heard in the crowd, made him reflect on the danger that might accrue to his family from the surviving representative of the party which had so long been a formidable rival to his own. But, whatever his feelings might have been, he did not suffer any symptom of jealousy to escape, and he received Piccinino with all the cordiality that could have been expected from the most generous and least suspicious of mankind.

Shortly after Piccinino's arrival at Milan, he obtained the hand of Drusiana; but the wedding was held in as quiet a manner as possible, in consequence of the recent death of Cosmo de' Medici. In the beginning of the following year Ferdinand sent an ambassador to Milan, for the purpose of bringing to Naples Hippolyta, the

destined bride of his son Alphonso. Shortly afterwards, Piccinino, either by his own desire or at the instigation of Sforza, or at the request of Ferdinand, (all of which are stated in the different accounts,) left Milan for Naples. Just before his departure, Sforza sent an ambassador to Ferdinand to guarantee him security and a reception due to his station, and ordered his confidential secretary, Pietro Postula, to accompany him. The king received him with every possible honour, and entertained him in his court for twenty-seven days. In the mean time his wife Drusiana was sent from Milan to his town of Sulmona. He was preparing to leave Naples on the twenty-eighth day after his arrival, when the king requested him to come into the castle to see his treasure; and when he had thus enticed him in there, he detained him as a prisoner. It was said that on the same day guards were stationed on all the roads leading from Naples, to prevent his departure. A few days after his incarceration he expired. It was generally given out at the time that he had broken his neck by having fallen down while attempting to climb up a window to get a view of what was going on outside; but it was shrewdly suspected that he had been strangled by the royal orders. At the same time his territories were all seized, and his soldiers stripped of their accoutrements and disbanded, by order of the king. The unfortunate Drusiana returned to Milan, where she not long afterwards brought a son into the world.

Such were the principal circumstances, as agreed

upon by all historians, relating to the death of Piccinino. A strong suspicion prevailed, both at the time and afterwards, that he had come to his untimely end by the connivance of Sforza, if not at his instigation. As many of the details from which a presumption can be raised in favour of innocency or guilt are given differently by different historians, it will be necessary, in order that the reader may form an impartial judgment, to lay the different versions of them before him.

The account that seems to leave the impression most unfavourable to Sforza is that given by Christoforo Soldo, a contemporary writer, the author of the *History of Brescia*, which is as follows:—"When the time fixed for the betrayal of the poor condottiere had come, after he had ratified his agreement with the duke, he said to him, 'That it was time for him to go and ratify it also with the king of Naples.' This the duke continued to urge him to do, which he for some time declined. 'I beseech you, my good lord and master,' said he, 'send me not to Naples, for, if I do go there, I shall never leave it alive.' But the aforesaid duke continued to press him, saying, 'Go, for I swear by my head that nobody shall hurt you.' Thus the poor condottiere took his departure, having been ordered for execution; and while on the way, he left his wife at Cesena with one of his sons, and brought the other with him to Naples. It is worthy of remarking, that while he was on his way thither, a son of Ferdinand's set out with three hundred horse to bring Hippolyta to his brother. In the mean time Piccinino arrived at Naples,

and was received by the king with all the honours with which the Jews received our Saviour before they took him and crucified him." After mentioning the manner in which he was seized, the writer goes on to say that there was for some time great uncertainty and anxiety through all Italy as to his fate, which was followed by a burst of indignation when there could no longer be any doubt of it. In the mean time the destined bride "remained at harbour at Siena for two months and a half, and then proceeded to her affianced husband. Throughout the whole of Italy it was said that the duke of Milan had sent Piccinino to execution, and that the king of Naples had been his executioner."

This account of Christoforo Soldo is confirmed in the main, and his opinions are also participated in by Corio, who was alive at the time, and wrote his history about twenty years afterwards. He says that "Piccinino's departure from Milan was entirely brought about by the duke, who dreaded lest his great valour, military skill, and popularity throughout Lombardy, Italy, and even in the town of Milan, should operate prejudicially to his children after his decease." Corio does not in general speak evil of Sforza, nor does he, indeed, relate this transaction as if any great blame was due to him for thus providing for the security of his family. Machiavelli says that the honours that were paid to Piccinino, on his entrance into Milan, hastened his ruin, as they increased the desire of the duke to put an end to him; and he seems to think that the favours which he continued to bestow on him were merely a mask to

conceal his real intentions. And Muratori, an impartial writer, who had doubtless well weighed all the evidence, is inclined to decide against Sforza.

Notwithstanding the unfavourable opinion of so many contemporary historians, it must be allowed that there is great semblance of truth in the account given by Simoneta, which will go far to exculpate Sforza. According to that historian, Piccinino went to Naples quite of his own wishes, and Sforza never either urged him to do so, or attempted to dissuade him from it. After Piccinino had been thrown into prison, Ferdinand sent letters to Sforza, in which he stated that, though he had been willing to pardon all the past, and had loaded him with honours, he found out that he was at that very instant holding communications with his enemies; so that a due regard, as well for the safety of his own kingdom as for the peace of the peninsula, compelled him to act as he did. Sforza, on the receipt of this letter, expressed great indignation, and said that he thought it hard that his son-in-law should be arrested in the presence of his ambassador on mere suspicion. He is also said to have foreseen fully how his own character would suffer if Piccinino came to a violent end. He therefore sent his son Tristanus to Ferdinand, requesting him as a favour to himself to pardon and liberate his son-in-law; and at the same time he gave directions that Hippolyta should not proceed any farther on her way to Naples till matters were settled. In the mean time, it was formally notified that Piccinino had been killed by the

accident reported above, on which Sforza said that he doubted not the fact of his death, but that he was incredulous as to the manner in which it was reported to have taken place. Tristanus, on his arrival at Naples, demanded that the body of his brother-in-law should be shown to him, in order that he might be convinced as to the mode of his death. On its being produced for his satisfaction, it appeared so utterly decomposed, that he came to the opinion that he must have died some time before he was reported to have met with the accident. Sforza himself was reported to be so indignant at the whole transaction that he debated for some time whether he should not break his alliance with Ferdinand, and the projected marriage of their families; and it is certain that Hippolyta was obliged to halt for two months at Siena. It was said that he was strongly urged to this course by Bianca Maria; but he finally came to the decision not to alter his policy, or to drive a king from a throne where it had taken so much trouble to place him, in consequence of an act for which the practice of the times afforded too many precedents.

Thus, in spite of what is said by Corio, Machiavelli, and others, whose opinions are doubtless entitled to deference, it must be acknowledged that there is much in Simoneta's evidence sufficient to raise a reasonable doubt of Sforza's guilt. His chief justification appears to rest on the account given of his conduct after he had been informed of Piccinino's arrest. M. Sismondi, who cannot be suspected of any partiality towards the man

who crushed the attempts of the Milanese to re-establish their independence, justly remarks that, if he had been really guilty, his secretary, who has undertaken his defence, would have laid more stress on the conspiracy which Ferdinand pretended to have discovered; or that, at all events, he would have affected to have believed the story of his having accidentally broken his neck. Besides, that if he had been determined to get rid of him, he would, in all probability, have availed himself of a false witness or an assassin, while he was sojourning at Milan with only one hundred of his followers; that one can hardly suppose Francesco Sforza guilty of such imprudence as to allow his intended victim to escape to his fortresses and his soldiers; and it is probable that he would not have incurred more obloquy by despatching him at Milan, than that which he fully foresaw Ferdinand's conduct would entail upon him. So well aware, indeed, was he of the imputations to which he would be subject, that he exclaimed that not all the water of the Po could efface from his character the stain that would be left upon it.

Simoneta's defence of Sforza is further confirmed by a modern historian, who has lately brought to light several interesting documents of the history of Milan. On the whole, it must be allowed that there is much to clear him from the suspicion, which seems to rest on no better foundation than the evil practices of the times, and the calumnies of his enemies. Those who may hesitate to acquit him of all evil intent in allowing Piccinino to go to Ferdinand, may perhaps concede that,

whatever he may have expected others to do, he himself was in no way accessory to his murder. His conduct after hearing of the imprisonment of his son-in-law, though perhaps irreconcilable with actual participation in the crimes of Ferdinand, may be thought to betoken the indignation or the remorse really felt by many men, after the secret object of their guilty wishes has been attained.

The character and conduct of Jacobo Piccinino cannot appear to advantage in a biography of Sforza. He was frequently opposed to, and almost always defeated by, that great man in the field; as neither his nor his father's career was crowned by such success as that of their rival, he occasionally did actions which must have appeared ignominious or petty, when compared with those of a sovereign who was able to guide the policy of the peninsula. Yet, withal, he is entitled to a greater reputation as a general, and certainly is not more deserving of blame as a man, than the majority of his contemporaries. Though frequently worsted by Sforza, he was often able to stay his progress; and after the duke had ceased to go forth at the head of his armies, he does not appear to have had his equal in the field. Ample proof of this is afforded by the eagerness with which his services were sought after, as well by Alphonso as by those who fought for his successor, and also by Sforza's own anxiety to secure them for his friend. There is no doubt but that his military skill would have placed John of Anjou on the throne, if the opposite party had not been backed by the

resources and the influence of Sforza. The more questionable deeds of his early life were done in conjunction with his elder brother, and possibly in deference to his authority; and judging from his subsequent popularity, he appears to have done nothing outrageous to the moral feelings of his contemporaries. His tragic and treacherous murder did much to cause the evil that he did to die with him, and his good deeds to live after him in the memory of men.

Francesco Sforza did not long survive the last great general of the Braccian school. Since his accession to the ducal throne, he had never ceased to entertain a lurking suspicion that the French would some day be formidable competitors either with himself or some of his descendants. For this reason he was extremely anxious to secure the good wishes of the present monarch, and to inspire him with a due sense of the extent of his resources and the valour of his troops. An opportunity of doing both was now presented to him. Louis was at this instant sore pressed by a contest with the feudal lords, and Sforza, though unsolicited by him, sent his son Galeazzo, along with six thousand men and his best captains, to his assistance. The departure of Galeazzo on his first campaign naturally excited great interest in his parents; they both accompanied him out of the city, and his mother proceeded to Vercelli, where she obtained the duke of Savoy's permission for her son to bring his army across the Alps. The expedition produced all the effects that could possibly have been desired; in a short time Galeazzo had so com-

pletely overrun the provinces adjoining the Rhone as to make the duke of Bourbon anxious to withdraw from the confederate nobles, that he might return to look after his dominions, after which Louis found no difficulty in coming to terms with the others. And the superiority of the Milanese soldiers in military tactics, more especially in taking cities, which was the principal work of the expedition, made such an impression on the French that they were said to have been looked upon as being almost more than ordinary mortals. Galeazzo Sforza, flushed with the glory of his first campaign, was on his way home with his army, when he received the unexpected intelligence of the event which made him duke of Milan.

The death of Francesco Sforza was in this wise. The king of France had sent ambassadors to thank him for the diversion he had made in his favour; and he received them with all the honour that he could show to a powerful monarch whose friendship he courted, and with the affability that men generally display after their projects have succeeded. All things, indeed, seemed to have gone well with him; he was in undisputed possession of a great empire, and had settled the affairs of Italy and France in the manner that he had desired. For aught that appeared to the contrary, he might now have anticipated many years' tranquil enjoyment of his honours. But in the plenitude of his content he had neglected his usual regimen of diet and medicine, which he had observed since the first appearance of his disease. On the 6th of March 1466, he experienced so sharp an

attack that his physicians prescribed extraordinary remedies. He does not appear to have been much alarmed on that day, for neither his disease nor his drugs prevented him indulging in a pleasure,* which now, at least, would be thought rather unbecoming in a man of sixty-five, who owed much of his good fortune to his wife. Shortly after he retired, he was attacked with such violent pains that his family and attendants were summoned. It soon became evident to all that his time was come; he lingered for upwards of twenty-four hours, and expired in the course of the following night.

Never, according to all accounts, did woman exhibit more heroic conduct than was displayed by Bianca Maria at the time of her husband's decease. She lost no time in calling medical aid, and seeing that every possible remedy was tried. But when the downcast looks of the physicians, and the failing voice and sinking pulse of her husband, showed her that all hope was gone, she bethought herself of every public measure that should be taken on such a trying emergency. Her first step was to despatch a messenger to Galeazzo, to inform him of his father's state. Though profoundly afflicted, and unable for a time to repress her emotions, she ordered the senate to assemble in the middle of the night, and particularly requested the attendance of those on whom she could most depend for keeping the people in order.

* "La medicina essendo nell' operare, come uomo molto disordinato, andò a lussuriare con una sua femina ch' egli teneva in quella propria notte, e subito gli vennero certi dolori grandissimi." — CRISTOFORO DA SOLDO, *Istoria Bresciana*.

And though she bore such marks of grief that her countenance seemed almost like that of a dead person, and though she had previously been unable to restrain her emotion, and many of the senators were themselves too full to give utterance to their thoughts, she had sufficient command over herself to be able to address them in a composed and dignified manner. When her husband had finally given up the ghost, she sent messengers to the principal states in Italy to notify the event, and to request them to acknowledge her son as his successor.

After she had taken every measure that seemed necessary for the good of the public, she made no attempt to restrain the violence of her grief. At different times her shrieks might be heard through the whole of the palace. She stood long and frequently by her husband's remains, gazing on his countenance, and seeming, as it were, to doubt the power of death. She would not allow the body to be moved for two whole days after the spirit had departed. On the third day, when it was absolutely necessary that it should be taken away, neither the fear of infection, nor the utmost efforts of the attendants, could prevent her loading the already decayed countenance with kisses. After she had been torn from it with difficulty, she is reported to have made a speech, in which she expressed, in the most beautiful language, the feelings called forth on such an occasion, and evinced the keenest regret that she had ever suffered herself, even through the jealousy that excessive fondness usually inspires, to quarrel with,

or in any way give annoyance to, her husband. Turning round to her ladies in waiting, she said, "Ye that are married, I entreat you, by the great God, be not troublesome to your lords. For, if you yourselves could but feel what I am now suffering in consequence, there is not one of you who would not henceforward be the most complacent of wives."

The remains of the duke, decorated in all the robes of state, were brought into the shrine of the public room, where they were suffered to lie in state during the remainder of the day. In his right hand was placed the sceptre, and on his side was the sword which he had worn in so many victories. Several of the citizens flocked thither to see whether the countenance which, in life, had been so commanding, had been much altered by death. Every mark of respect usual on such occasions was exhibited; and from the absence of any attempt at insurrection, we may infer that he had done something to gain the affections, and to merit the regrets, of his subjects.

It had been the good fortune of Francesco Sforza to unite with his political and military talents great personal advantages. On many occasions, as has already been related, his commanding appearance and his excellent address did him good service. In stature he was about the middle height, and in activity, strength, and capability of enduring fatigue, he scarcely had any equals. In running and jumping he excelled all his contemporaries, and is said to have been able to lift and to throw heavy stones and iron weights with as

great facility as if they had been pieces of wood. He was patient of hunger and thirst to an extraordinary degree, and seemed scarcely to feel the blows and the wounds that were inflicted upon him in battle. Though able to do with very few hours of rest, he was never kept off his sleep by over-fatigue or anxiety; and though his repose was never broken by the clang of arms, the neighing of horses, or the other ordinary sounds of the camp, he was always the first roused by any emergency. He ate but little, and, according to his biographer, did not yield to the most delicate of young ladies in the nice and sparing manner in which he took his food. During his meals, he used constantly to admit people to his presence, and to discuss with them the most intricate questions of policy and war. He was prodigal of money, for which he was frequently reproved by his friend and benefactor, Cosmo de' Medici, who, a merchant himself, could make little allowances for the extravagance of a soldier of fortune. To all such admonitions he used to reply, that he would sooner die than be esteemed stingy; that, as Providence had given him a powerful sovereignty, he thought he could not make better use of his resources than to reward those by whose assistance he had succeeded; that his children would have money enough if they were honest men, and that, if they were not, they would be better without any. In private life he was singularly humane and benevolent, and if ever he thought he had offended anybody in a moment of irritation, he endeavoured to make up for it by subsequent courtesy. He

was exceedingly kind to all who had been plunged into distress by vicissitude of politics or fortune, and is said to have frequently gone about in person to visit the sick and the needy. It was, no doubt, principally by these qualities that he attained that great popularity in the army which even his enemies do not deny.

Of his general character it would be superfluous to say much, after having detailed and discussed the principal actions of his life. It will not, I think, be denied, that he was endowed with all the great and most of the good qualities that generally fall to the lot of mankind. His abilities were singularly developed and displayed by the various circumstances in which he was placed. The tact by which he won his way to fame, before his marriage with Bianca Maria; the perseverance with which he struggled against adversity from that time till the death of his father-in-law; the great military skill and political sagacity by which he succeeded, notwithstanding false friends and dangerous enemies, in placing himself on the throne of Milan; the firmness by which he secured himself, combined with the moderation which he exhibited in his new position; the policy by which, after having made himself arbiter of Italy, he laid the foundation of thirty years' peace and prosperity, show a combination of active and reflective powers rarely to be found in one person. Muratori, one of the deepest read and most impartial of Italian historians, gives his opinion in the following words,—"The more we reflect on the actions of this unrivalled prince, the more readily must we acknowledge, notwithstanding the opinion of

some, that, for many centuries, Italy has not produced so renowned a hero as Francesco Sforza, in whom there was a rare combination of wonderful valour with uncommon political sagacity. In twenty-two battles which he gave, he always ended by being conqueror, and he was never conquered by any. His father, Sforza Attendolo, having risen from the lowest station of life, began to build the fortune of the family; but his son, Francesco, proceeding with gigantic steps, advanced it in such a manner that he came to be at the head of the most noble duchy of Milan, and the proud city of Genoa, and to attain such a fame, that he certainly deserves to be compared with the greatest captains of antiquity, and reckoned among the most illustrious people in the history of Italy."

With respect to his moral qualities, it must be acknowledged that his memory is tarnished as well by undeniable acts of treachery and intrigue, as by the suspicion of deeds that few men of the present age dare do. In palliation of these, it must be recollected that his lot was cast in an age when the arts recommended in the Prince and the Discourses of Machiavelli were by many thought to be essential to success in public life, and that the main ground of the suspicions against him is the evil practice of the times. At present, a man who holds a prominent station is not generally deemed guilty of bloodshed in the absence of strong evidence; but in medieval Italy, a public man was invariably supposed to have had some hand in a murder conducive to his interests, if he could not prove

himself innocent. Thus, the stronger the presumptive evidence of his guilt, the greater will be the excuse afforded by the ways of the age. We have the acknowledgment of M. Sismondi, that among his contemporaries he was reckoned most loyal, most generous, and most faithful in friendship. If it be true that men's characters may be known from those of their associates, his friendship with some of the brightest ornaments of the fifteenth century affords strong testimony in his favour. And there is none of his misdeeds for which he might not plead the excuse that is said to have been always in the mouth of one of the greatest heroes of antiquity—"If one must sometimes do wrong for the sake of a sovereignty, it is most glorious to do wrong; but in other things one should always act righteously." *

Thus of Francesco Sforza it may truly be said, that his good deeds were his own, his evil ones were those of the age in which he lived. As Italy contained as many political organisations at that time as are now to be found in all of Europe, the number of men engaged in public life bore a much greater proportion to the rest of mankind than it does at present. Hence the crimes for which ambition was supposed to afford sufficient excuse were then of more frequent occurrence, and public opinion was more tolerant of them in Italy than it would be now in other countries of the same extent and population. It may be questioned whether this lax

* "εἴπερ γὰρ ἀδικεῖν χρὴ τυράννιδος περὶ
κάλλιστον ἀδικεῖν τἄλλα δ' εὐσέβειν χρεών."
—Eurip. *Phœnissæ.*

A distich said to have been constantly in the mouth of Julius Cæsar.

state of public morality did not more than counterbalance all the advantages of wealth, learning, and refinement, which the early freedom of Italy and the absence of centralisation called into existence. The opening of a career of distinction to every man of ability has always been reckoned one of the greatest advantages of republican institutions and local self-government. The life of the man who was said by the annalist of Italy to be one of the greatest heroes of his country, and allowed by his contemporaries to be just, humane, and generous, affords too many examples of the deeds which every one who would then tread the path of fame was compelled to do. Can it be said that mankind were either better or happier by the political organisations which afforded opportunities, and held forth inducements, to enter on this career?

THE END.

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